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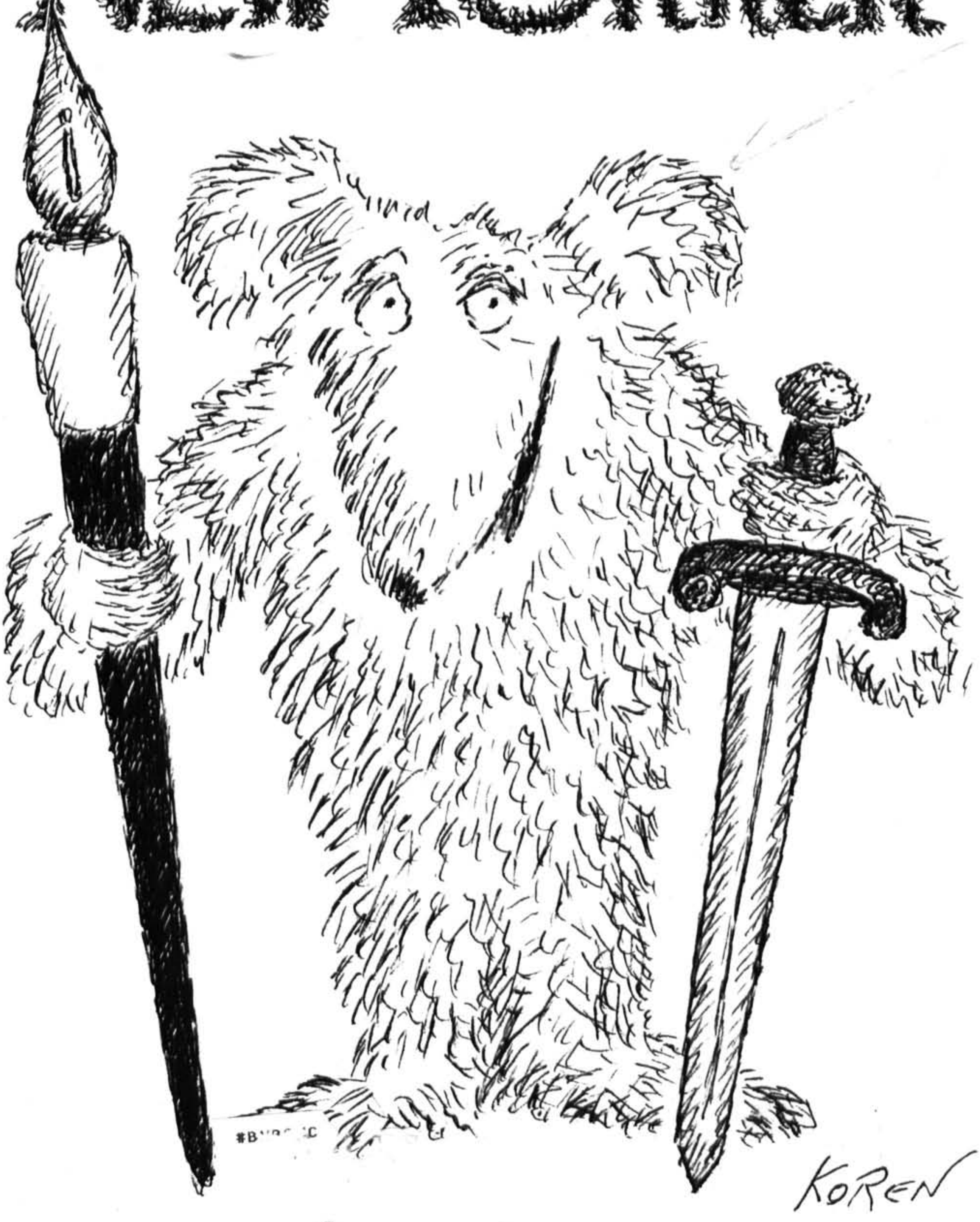
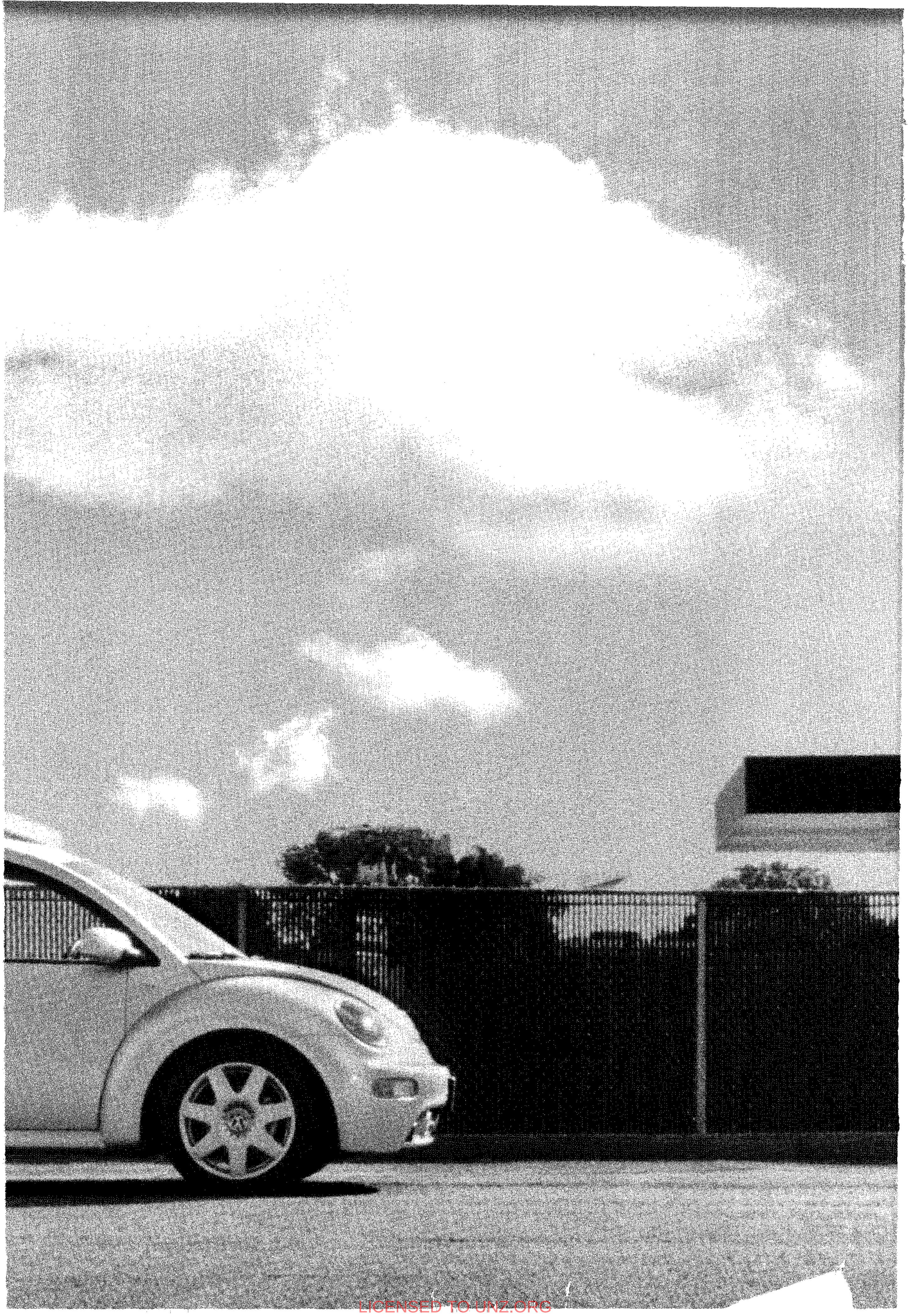
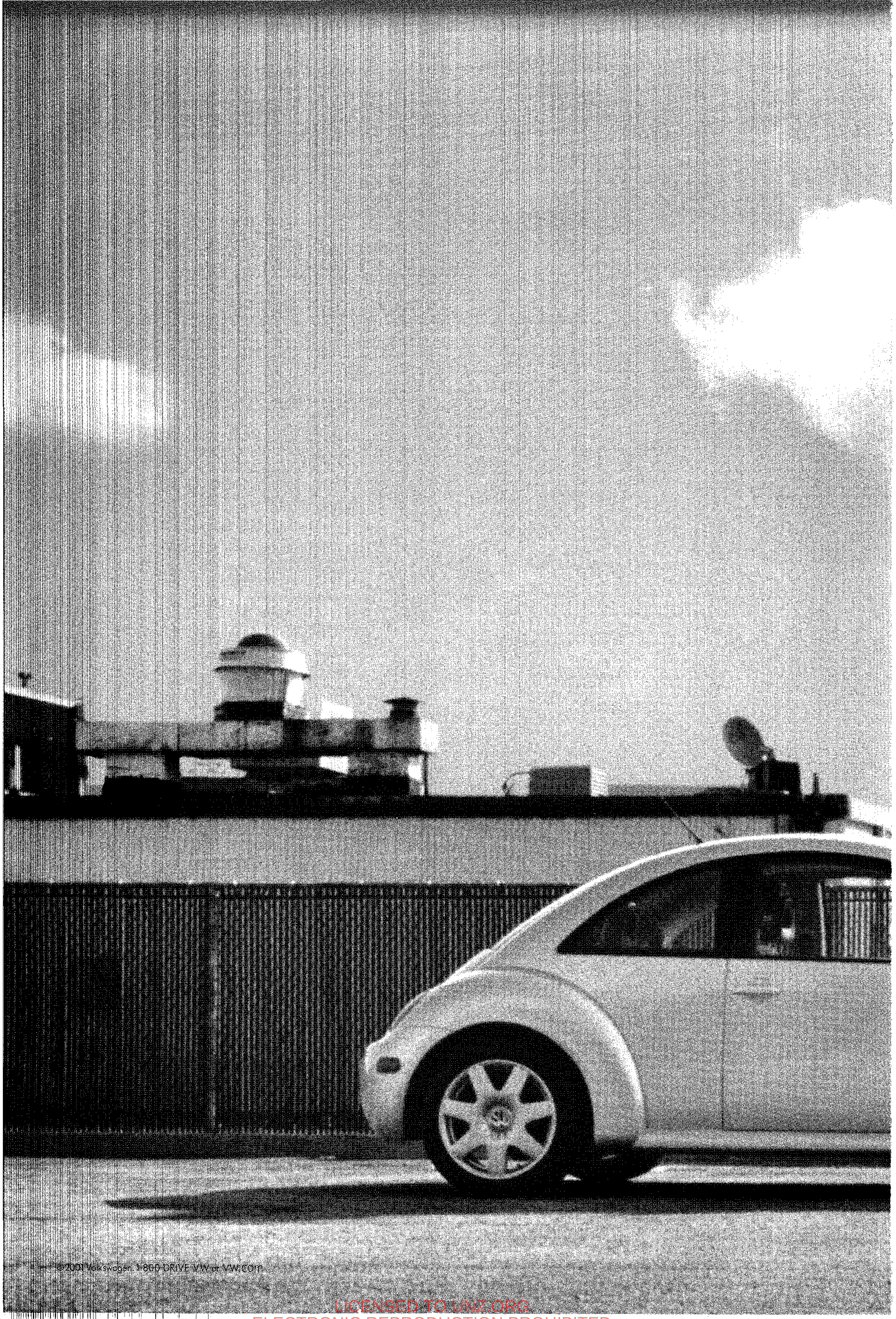
THE NEW YORKER

NOV. 12, 2001







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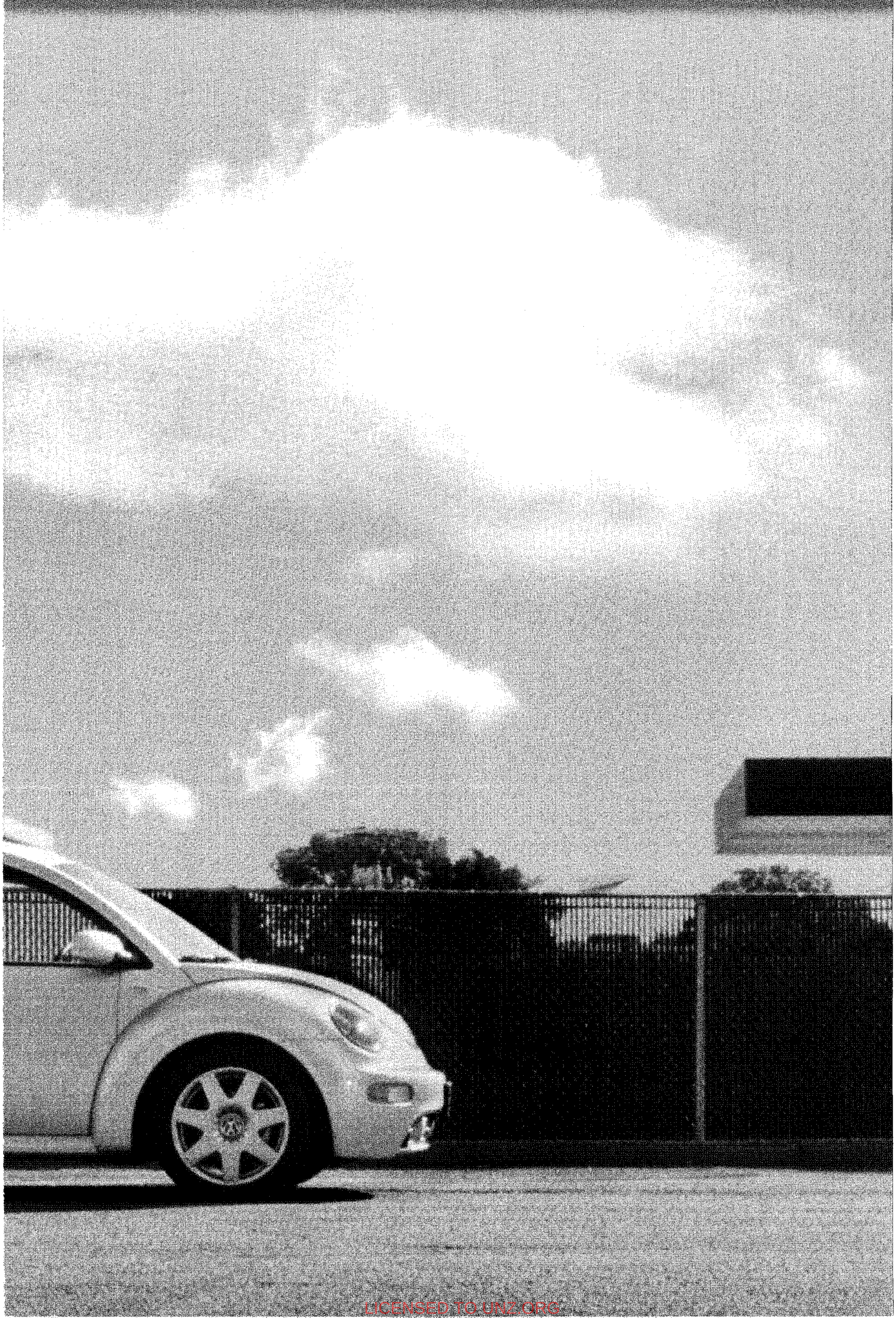

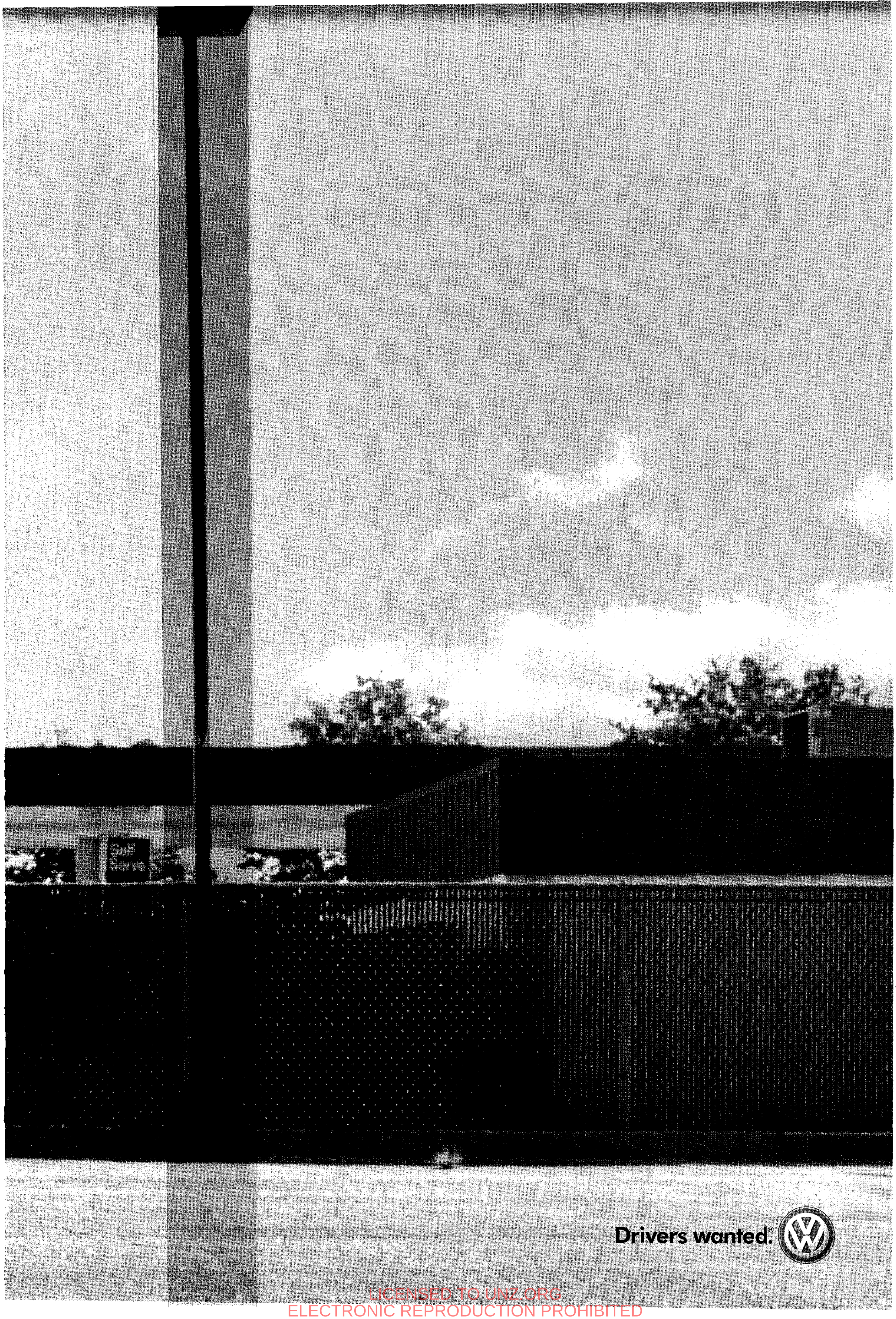
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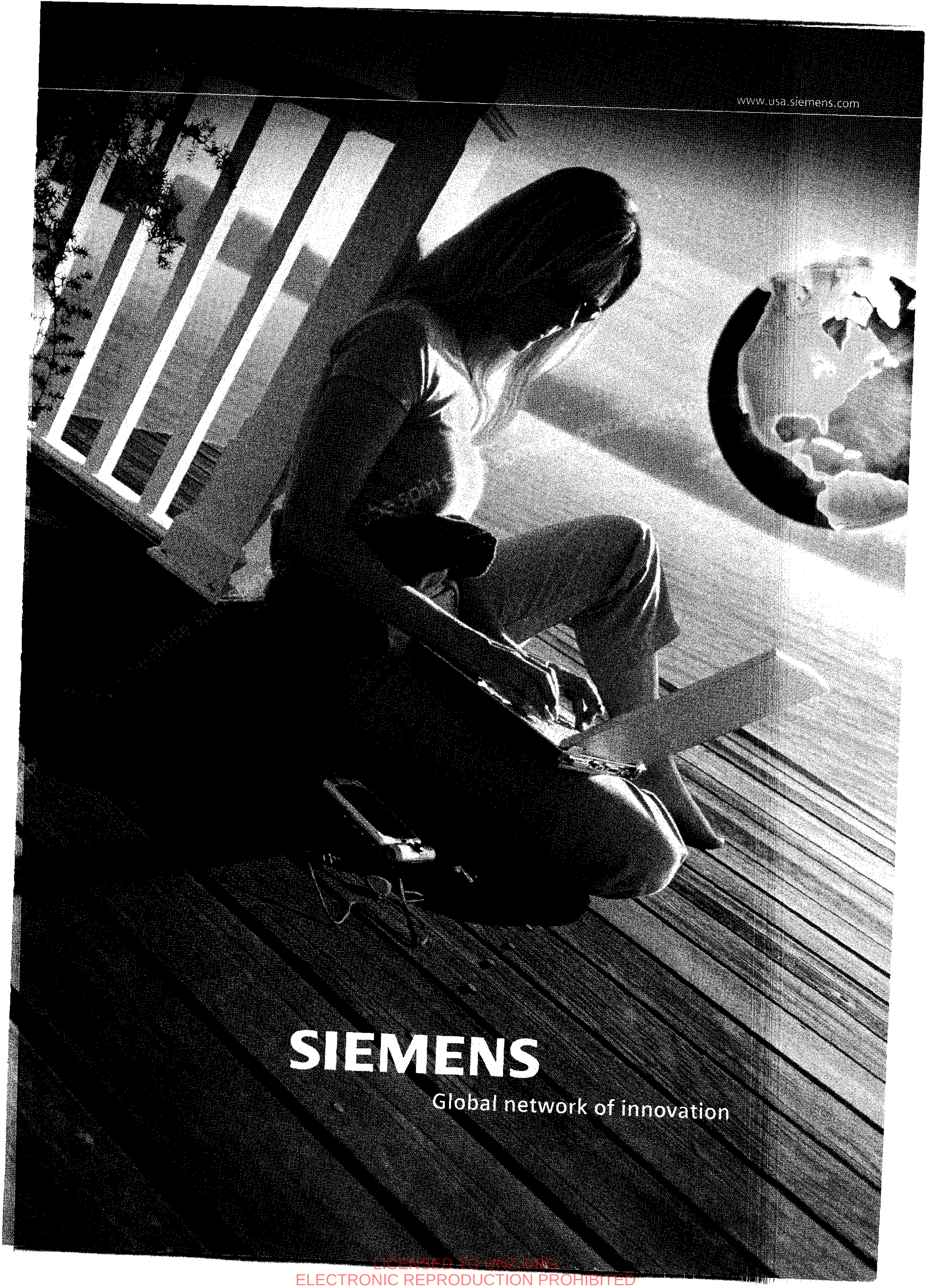
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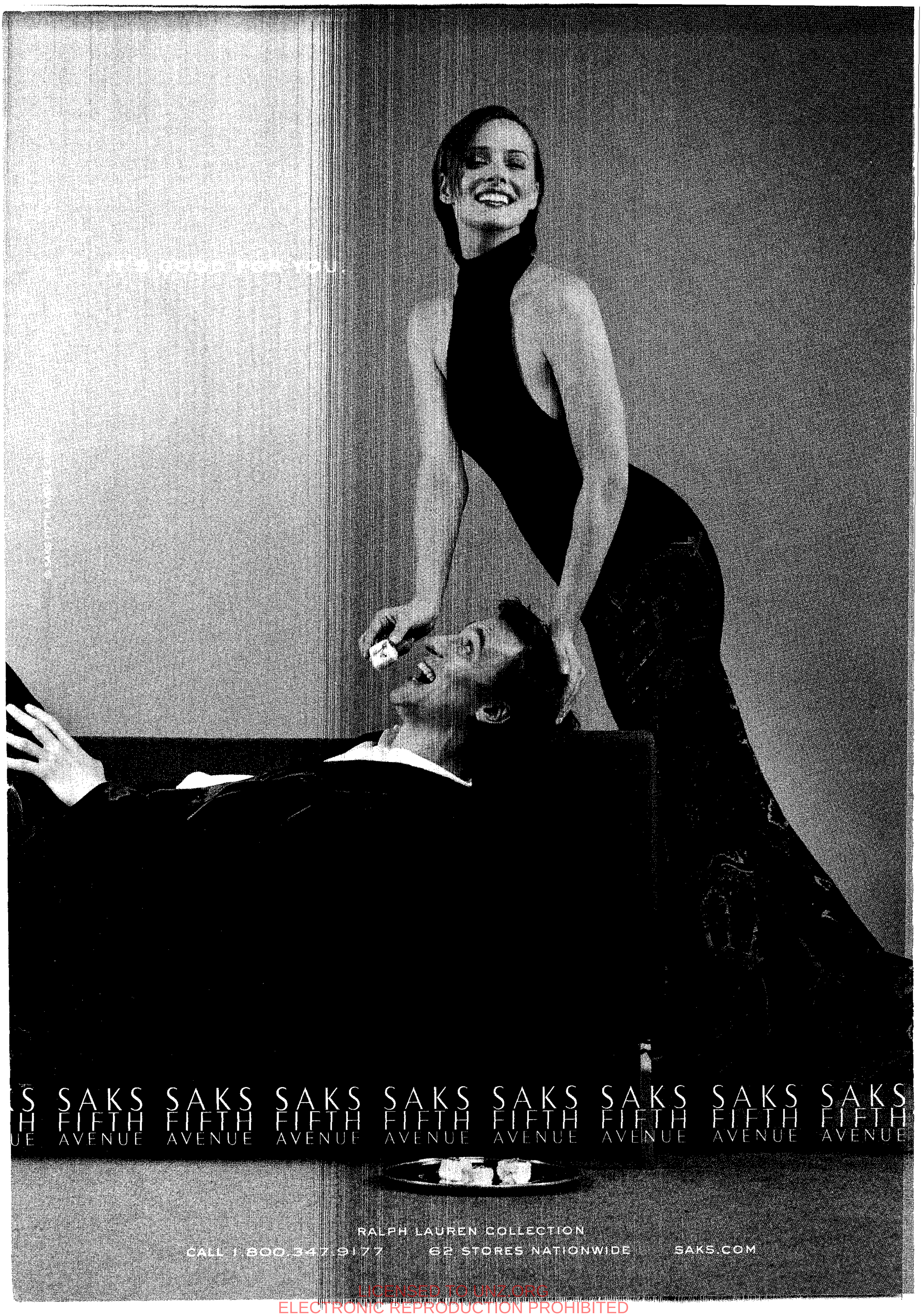
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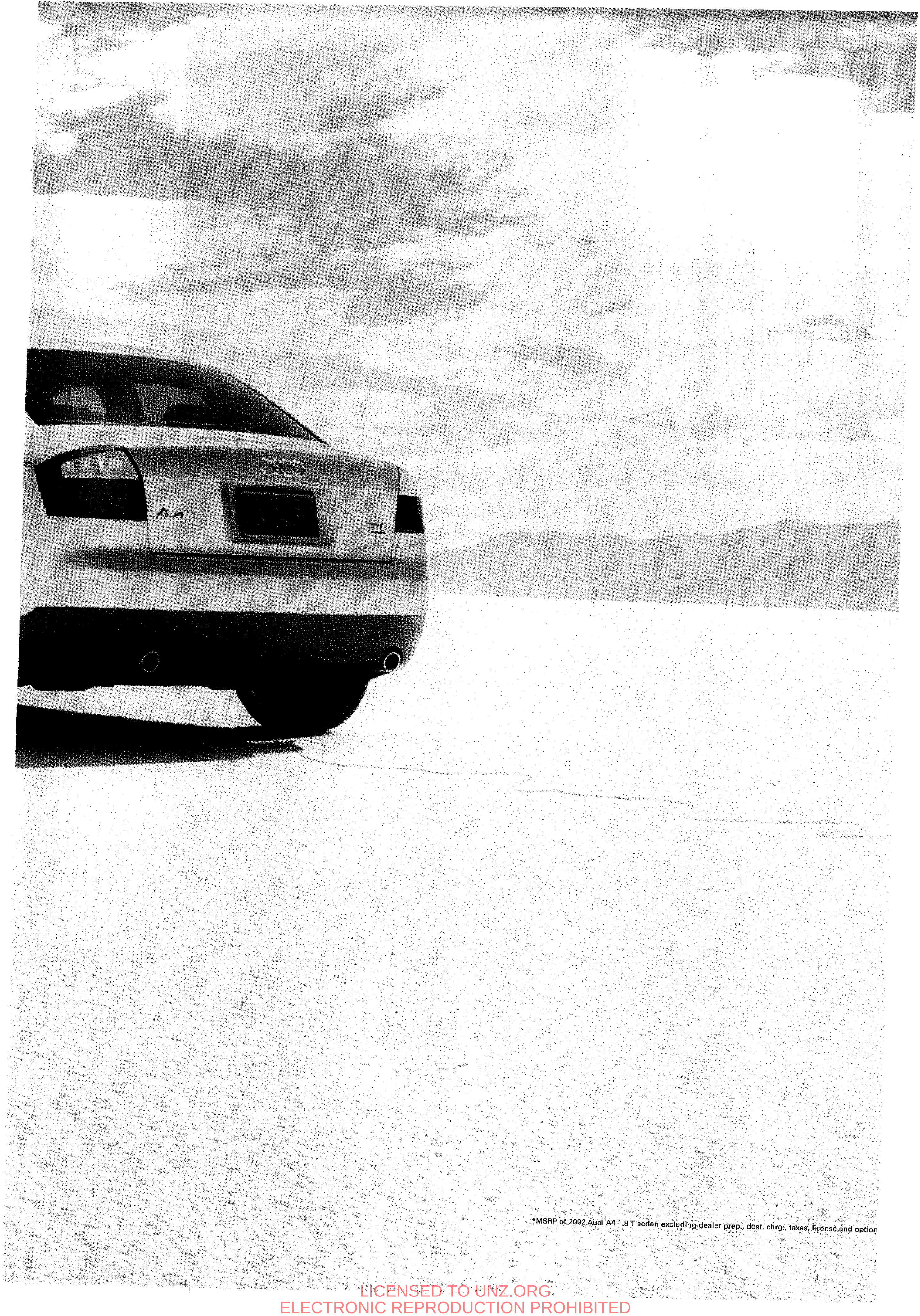

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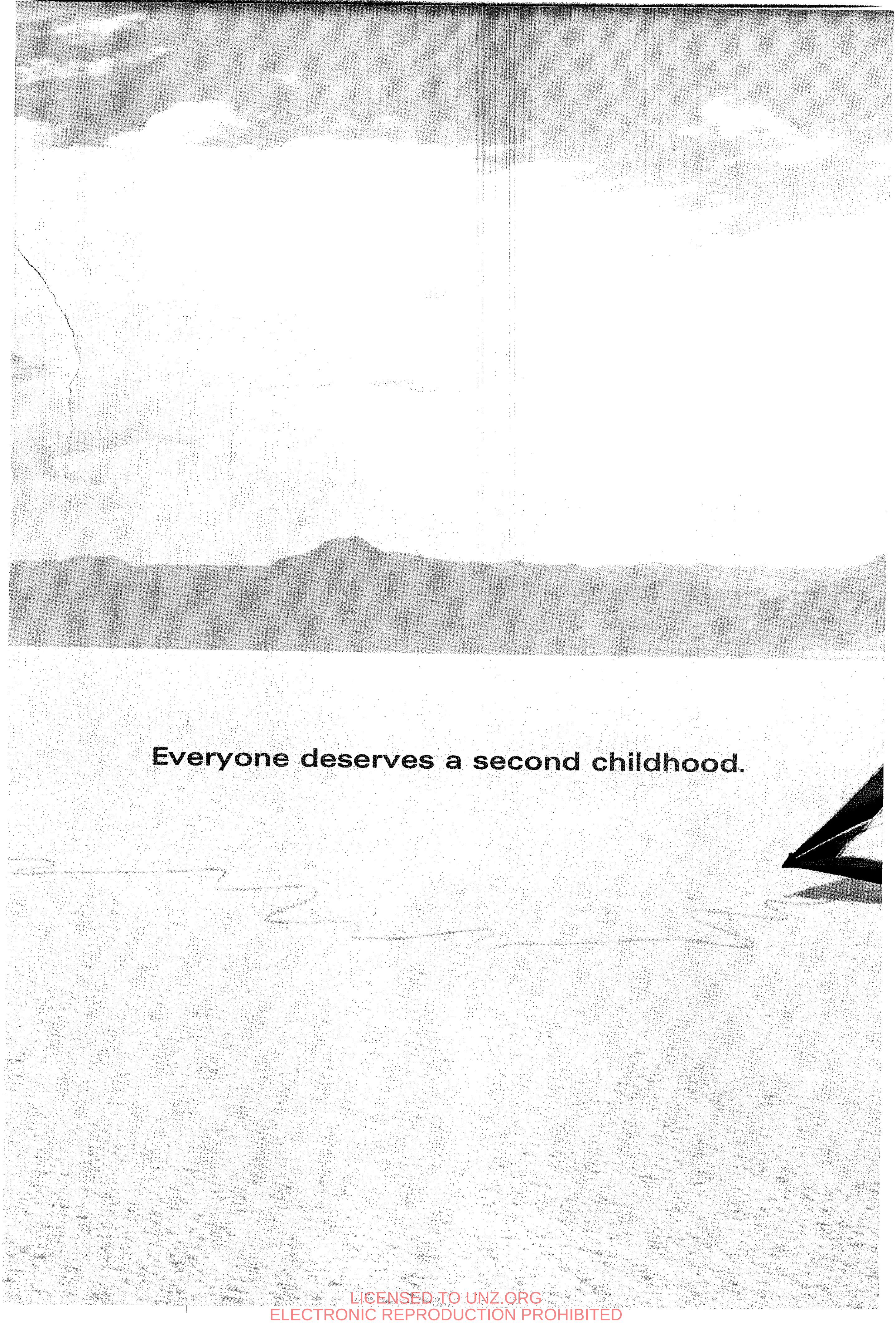
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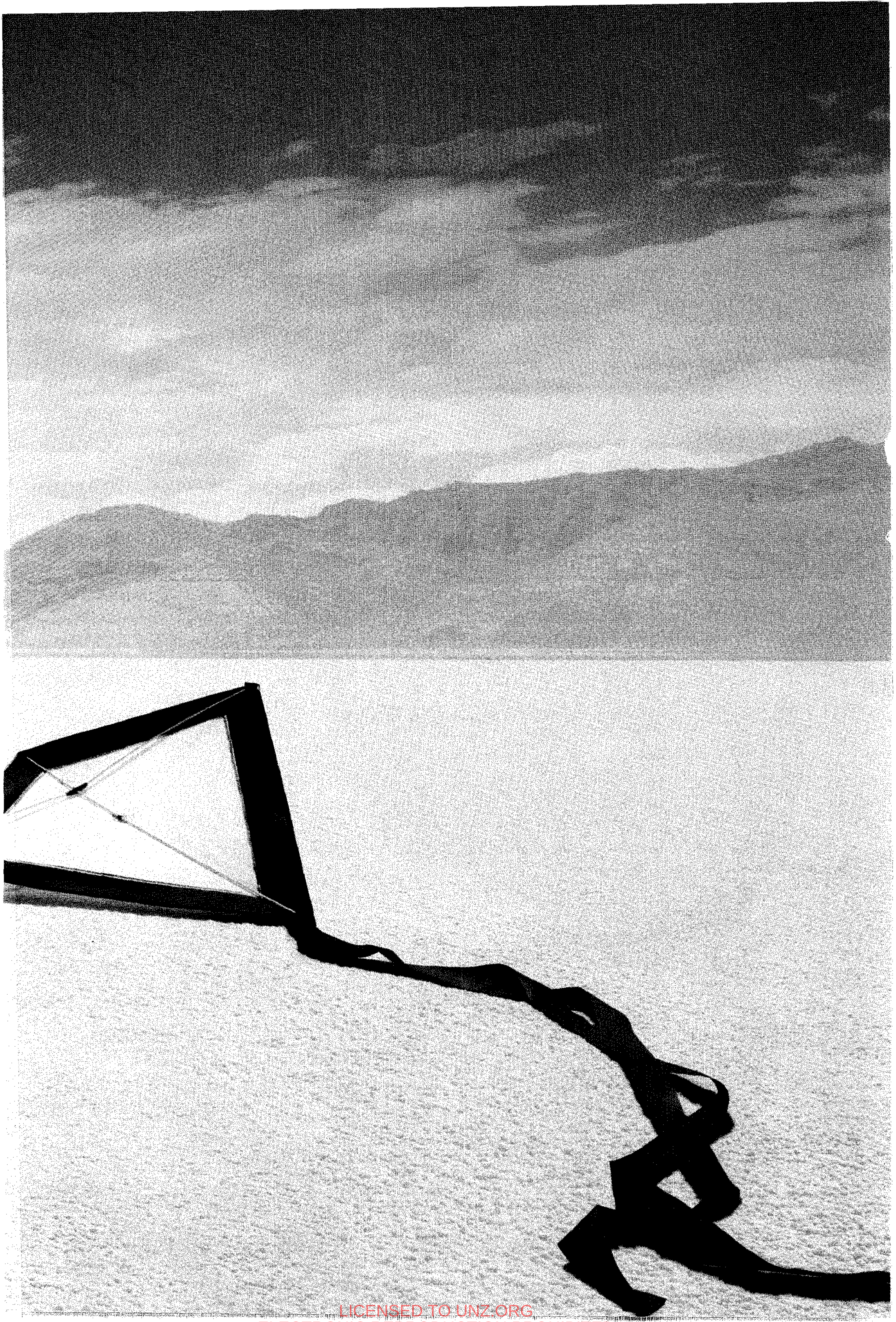

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CONTRIBUTORS

Jane Mayer ("The House of bin Laden," p. 54) is a staff writer and the co-author of two books: "Strange Justice" and "Landslide."

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The Metro Section
The New York Times
Sports Tuesday
W Miller

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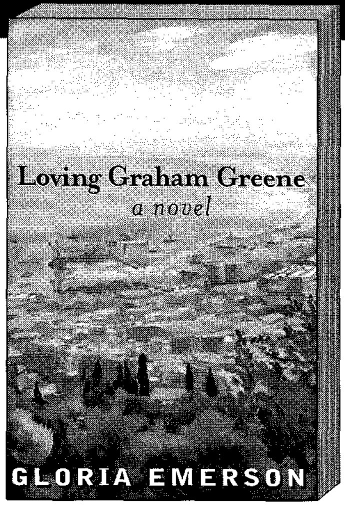

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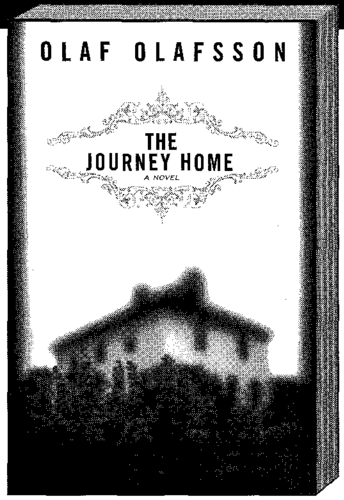

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BETTING THE KINGDOM

Seymour M. Hersh's portrait of the Saudi Arabian monarchy as a regime at risk of collapse mischaracterized United States-Saudi relations and internal Saudi politics over the past twenty years ("King's Ransom," October 22nd). There is no doubt that the Saudis face problems that need urgent attention, such as rising unemployment and radical Islamic fundamentalism. But, based on our experience as American diplomats in the kingdom, we can say that the reality is far different from that which Hersh describes. For example, he quotes a "senior American diplomat" who says that the regime could fall under a determined attack by a small group of fundamentalists. He seems unaware of the record of the American-trained Saudi National Guard. During the hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca by millions of Muslims, these forces have withstood myriad challenges to Saudi security. The kingdom is no paper tiger, and it is capable of managing such challenges. Hersh would do well to examine his sources' preconceptions and motives, as well as his own.

Wyche Fowler, former Ambassador to Saudi Arabia
Edward S. Walker, former Assistant Secretary of State
Washington, D.C.

Hersh's article on Saudi Arabia—a country ruled by a royal family that is corrupt and alienated from its people—illustrates the morally dangerous position that America has put itself in by supporting the Saudis. Sadly, we have seen this pattern before. Many Americans once rationalized slavery in the belief that the economy—at least in parts of the country—depended on it. But the more the South clung to slavery, the worse the situation became, leading to civil war and a host of ills. Similarly, our addiction to oil causes us to make shameful accommodations to tyrants in countries we wouldn't be engaged with otherwise. America makes foolish choices when it sacrifices its values to immediate economic interests. As with the plantation economy, we have the resources and technology to wean ourselves from oil. And, as the South discovered, we will be able to prosper, too. We just don't have the political will yet—or the leadership.

David A. Kronfeld
New York City

As an American who has lived in Saudi Arabia, I was glad to read Hersh's report. My family and I were there through the Gulf War, and though it was frightening, we felt at one with the Saudis. Now it's hard to know who our friends, and our enemies, are. Many Americans experience the anger of the Saudi population on a daily basis, and official blindness to how we are regarded doesn't help. For years, the royal family has used a Band-Aid to cover a gaping wound of discontent. It may soon prove impossible to heal.

Karen Powers
Red Lodge, Montana

THE WRONG MAN

Anthony Lane, in his look back at Billy Wilder and his films, describes an incident involving Wilder and Anton Lang, an actor who had played Christ in the Oberammergau Passion Play before the war, "joined the S.S.," and then, after the war, "requested permission to take up the role once more" (Books, October 22nd). Wilder, whose job was to screen performers for the U.S. Army, supposedly consented on one condition: "Use real nails." Although this story has unfortunately appeared elsewhere, it is false. Anton Lang, my father, died in 1938, before the war began. He played the role of Christ in 1900, 1910, and 1922 only. He was never a member of the S.S., or of the Nazi Party. And he never had the pleasure of meeting Billy Wilder.

G. O. Lang
Santa Fe, N.M.

●

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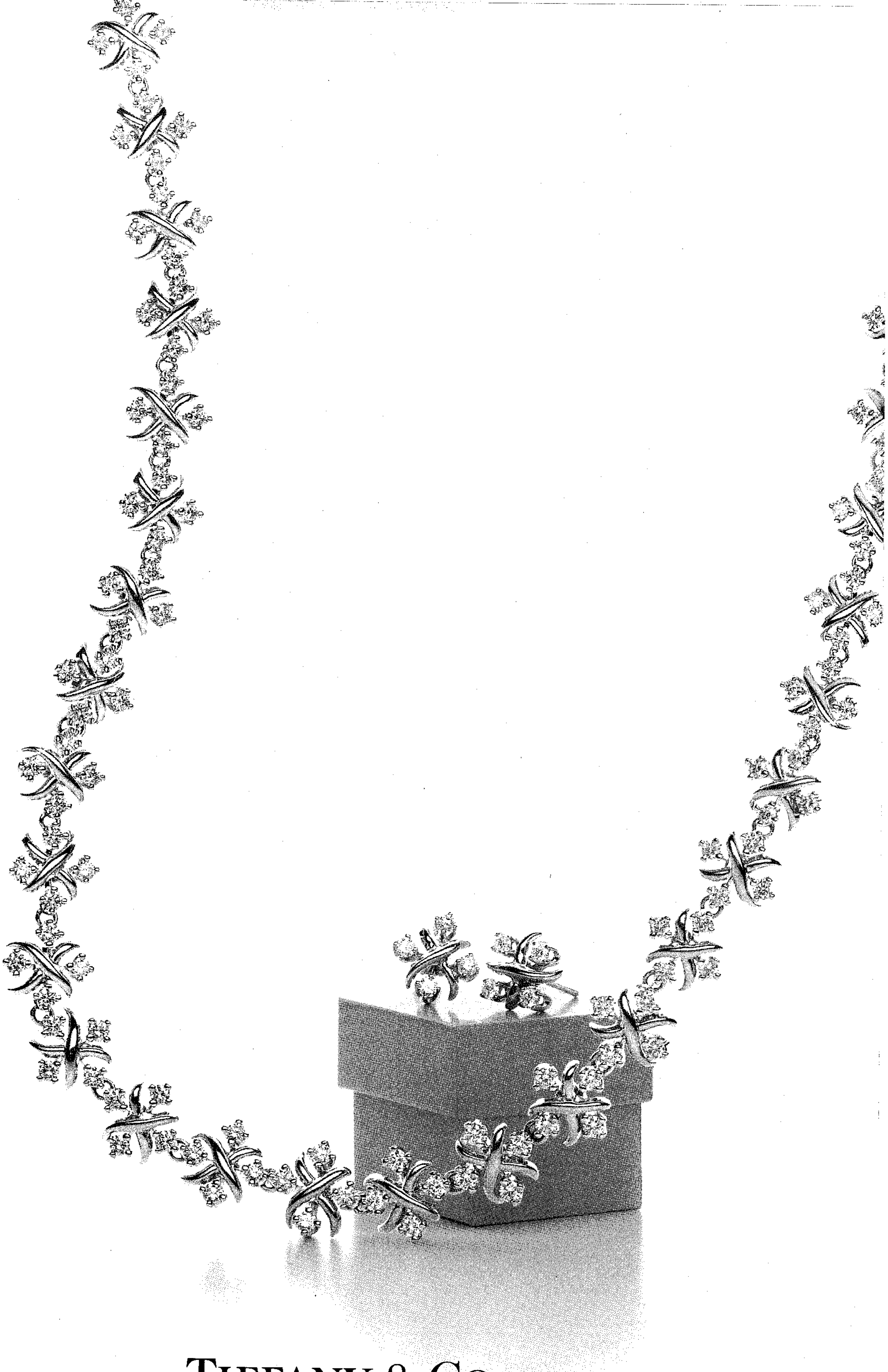

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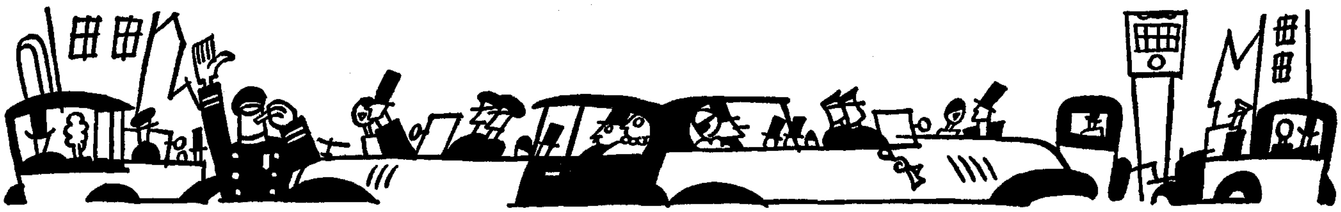

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

EVERETT BEEKIN
Bebe Neuwirth and Robin Bartlett lead the cast in Richard Greenberg's new play, which traces the history of a Jewish family through four generations, from New York to California. In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

FERDYDURKE
Poland's Teatr Provisorium & Kompania Teatr performs a stage adaptation of the playwright Witold Gombrowicz's formerly banned 1937 surrealist novel about a thirty-year-old man who relives his childhood, literally. Previews Nov. 8-10. Opens Nov. 11 at 8 and runs through Nov. 25. Some performances will be in Polish. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. For schedule information about English and Polish performances, call 475-7710.)

45 SECONDS FROM BROADWAY
Neil Simon's new comedy is set in the Edison Hotel coffee shop, a hangout for theatre types. Directed by Jerry Zaks. In previews through Nov. 10. Opens Nov. 11 at 5. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

THE GLORY OF LIVING
Philip Seymour Hoffman directs a new drama by Chicago playwright Rebecca Gilman, which examines domestic violence. In previews. (MCC, 120 W. 28th St. 206-1515.)

IPHIGENEIA AT AULIS
The Pearl Theatre Company's staging of Euripides' tragedy. Previews begin Nov. 8. (80 St. Marks Pl. 505-3401.)

QED
The atom-bomb physicist Richard Feynman's book "Tuva or Bust!" (written with Ralph Leighton) was the inspiration for this two-character play by Peter Parnell, starring Alan Alda and Kellie Overbey. Gordon Davidson is the director. In previews. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

SEXAHOLIX . . . A LOVE STORY
John Leguizamo's new solo show. In previews. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

[SIC]
Soho Rep kicks off the season with a comedy by Melissa James Gibson about a trio of aging prodigies. Previews begin Nov. 11. (46 Walker St. 479-7979.)

SONGS OF PARADISE
From the Folksbiene Yiddish Theatre, the 1989 satirical retelling of the Book of Genesis, based on Itsik Manger's Biblical poetry. In previews through the Nov. 8 matinée. Opens that night at 8. (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200.)

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SPEAKING IN TONGUES
A new play by Andrew Bovell (who co-wrote the film "Strictly Ballroom"), which is described as a "psychological thriller, murder mystery, and partner-swapping satire." Karen Allen and Kevin Anderson lead the cast. Mark Clements is the director. In previews. (Gramercy Theatre, 127 E. 23rd St. 307-4100.)

THE WOMEN
Scott Elliott directs a cast that includes Kristen Johnston, Rue McClanahan, Cynthia Nixon, Jennifer Tilly, Mary Louise Wilson, and Jennifer Coolidge, in Clare Boothe Luce's 1936 satire. With costumes by Isaac Mizrahi. Two previews on Nov. 7. Opens Nov. 8 at 7. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-1300.)

OPENED RECENTLY

AN ADULT EVENING OF SHEL SILVERSTEIN
The Atlantic Theatre Company opens the season with ten one-acts by the writer-cartoonist-composer-lyricist. (336 W. 20th St. 239-6200. Closes Nov. 25.)

BY JEEVES
P. G. Wodehouse's manservant has been musicalized by Alan Ayckbourn (book and lyrics) and Andrew Lloyd Webber (score). Mr. Ayckbourn is the director. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (ABRIDGED)
A revival of Adam Long, Daniel Singer, and Jess Winfield's comedy, in which three actors (Peter Ackerman, Jeremy Shamos, and David Turner) perform thirty-seven plays and a hundred and fifty-four sonnets in under two hours. (Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

DANCE OF DEATH
As a couple about to celebrate—if that's the right word—their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, Helen Mirren and Ian McKellen square off in Strindberg's depiction of the blasted heath of matrimony, and they do battle magnificently. Their attacks on each other are so predictable and so regular that you laugh as often as you wince. Mirren, playing a former actress (if there is such a thing as a former actress), is droll and wicked, and McKellen, in his deep embrace of the role of an army captain who comes face to face with his own mortality, is a life force; as a presence onstage, he is the sound of two hands clapping. Directed by Sean Mathias; also with David Strathairn. (Reviewed in our issue of 10/22/01.) (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

ELAINE STRITCH AT LIBERTY
The Broadway star sings songs and tells tales about her life in the theatre, in a one-woman show co-created with *The New Yorker's* theatre critic John Lahr. George Wolfe is the director. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400.)

EVERYTHING THAT RISES MUST CONVERGE
Rather than dramatic adaptations of three Flannery O'Connor stories ("A View of the Woods," "Greenleaf," and the title tale), the director Karin Coonrod has put together staged recitations of the originally published texts. Eight actors share the burden, speaking the dialogue (including every "he said" and "she said"), divvying up and delivering the narrative passages, and executing sometimes literal, sometimes expressionistic interpretations of the action described therein. It's not a very good idea for an evening of theatre. One skillful speaker might have brought these funny, grotesque stories more affectingly alive. Or you could stay home and read them yourself. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 239-6200.)

HAVANA IS WAITING
In Eduardo Machado's new drama, a Cuban-American man returns to Havana after having been sent to Miami as a child in 1961. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.)

HEDDA GABLER
This "Hedda," starring Kate Burton and directed by Nicholas Martin, is all surface brightness—it twinkles rather than burns. Jon Robin Baitz's colloquial adaptation of Ibsen's drama leaves little room for shading or depth, and the entire cast, which includes Michael Emerson, Harris Yulin, David Lansbury, and Angela Thornton, suffers under Nicholas Martin's heavy-handed and misguided direction, as does the audience. (10/22/01) (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

MAMMA MIA!
Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus's musical, set on a mythical Greek island, employs the songs of their defunct rock band, ABBA. (11/5/01) (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 563-5544.)

THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO
Once again, David Herskovits and his Target Margin Theatre triumphantly re-create a classic. In this case, it's the Beaumarchais play on which the opera was based, newly translated by "the company." Miranda Hoffman's bawdily elegant costumes set the tone for the production right away, with a combination of modern and eighteenth-century elements which parallels the script's similarly successful amalgamation of a classic, poetic translation

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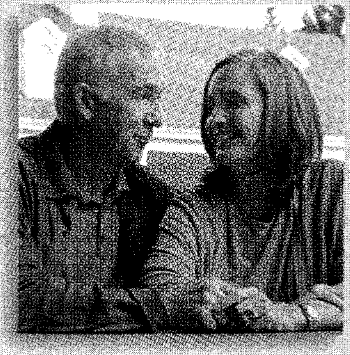

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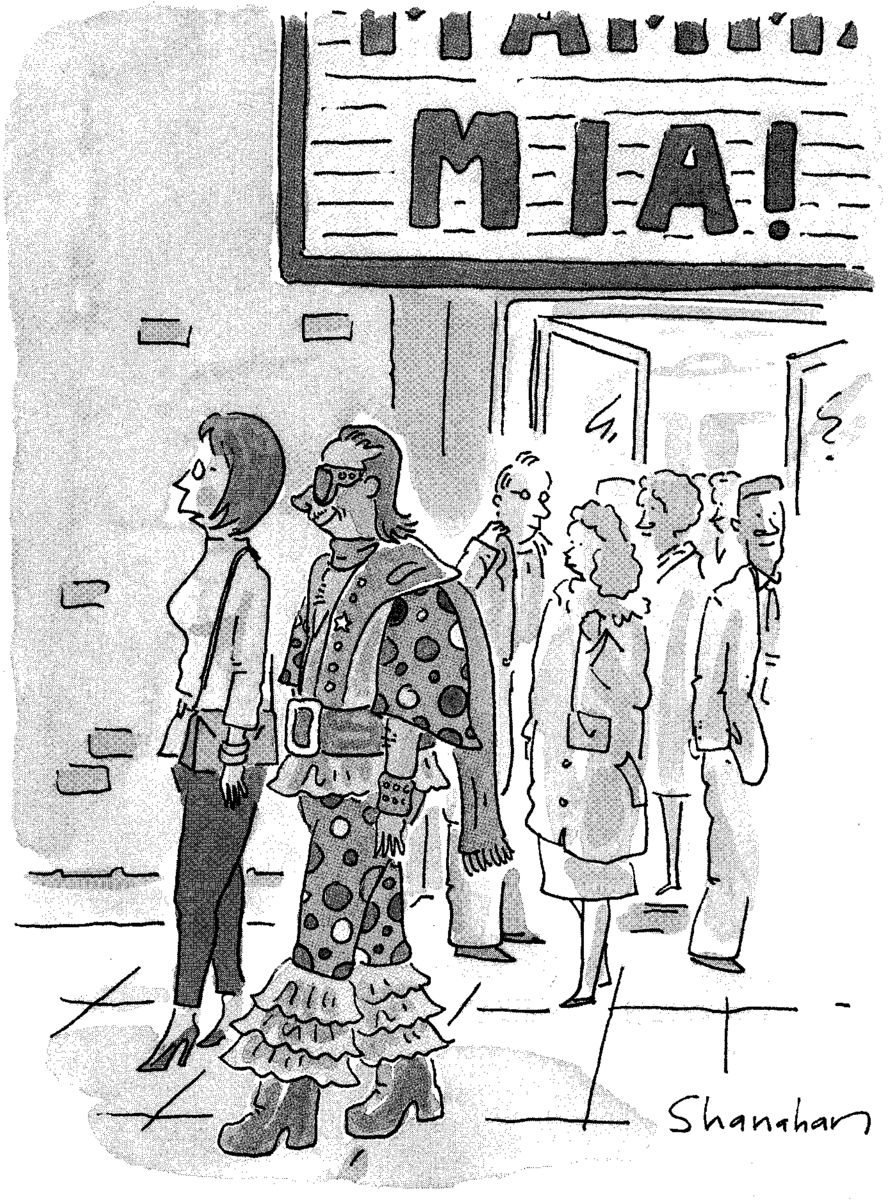
and modern, slangier language. The actors—all terrific—make it clear that they know they're playing a farce, and yet their pain and confusion as the plots and counterplots unfold are just as convincing as their knowing asides. And Mr. Herskovits's ability to focus all the intelligence and high energy on display makes this a vivid, funny, rich, and even relevant evening. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 358-3657. Closes Nov. 17.)

METAMORPHOSES
Ovid said, "All things change, nothing perishes," and Mary Zimmerman's fluid and beautiful interpretation of several legends from his fifteen-book history of the world is reassuring proof. Her modern staging, which charmingly and wittily incorporates colloquial language and costumes that range across time, confirms the enduring and elemental power of myth. Here—on a stark set composed only of a large crystal chandelier, a battered manorial door, a suspended image of sky and clouds, and an oblong, twenty-seven-foot pool—real love, thwarted, begets love in other forms; kindness is rewarded in unexpected ways; and evil often backfires. But sometimes the good are punished and the bad triumph, because even the gods in charge surrender to flawed human emotion. A tonic for anyone who needs to believe that terrible events can transform us. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)



"I knew you'd like it." (The ABBA-inspired musical, "Mamma Mia!")

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING
It's gimmick Shakespeare, and it really works. The accomplished Aquila Theatre Company has set the Bard's comic examination of trust, mistrust, and sharp-tongued singles destined for couplehood in London in an "Avengers"-influenced swinging sixties. The men wear bowlers and Savile Row suits, the women are smart and slinky in black vinyl. The story is advanced with the help of some go-go choreography, and "Hey Nonny Nonny" sung to a bossa-nova beat is just plain cool. What is not at all tricked up is the language, which is beautifully spoken, dramatically revealing, and crystalline in effect. (Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 239-6200.)

NOISES OFF
Patti LuPone and Peter Gallagher lead the cast in a revised version of Michael Frayn's 1982 backstage comedy. Jeremy Sams is the director. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

PUPPETRY OF THE PENIS
It's one thing for a man to develop the ability to stretch his scrotum until it's the size of a dinner plate, but another to share this talent with the world. These two Australians, Simon Morley and David (Friendy) Friend, call their transformations "installations" and give them such suggestive names as "Kentucky Fried Chicken," "The Windsurfer," and "A Slowly Emerging Mollusk." The success, if you will, of an installation depends largely upon an assistant with a video camera who projects the finished work, in extreme closeup, onto a giant screen. It's all supposed to be good, clean, nasty fun; the Aussies even profess embarrassment at the success of their "little pub show." Still, it's a con: fifteen minutes into their act they are utterly naked and out of ideas. They can't go on, but they do. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St.)

REBEL WITHOUT A PAUSE
The performance artist Reno, in her latest show. Mondays at 8. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710.)

SALEM
A play by Alex Roe, which takes off where Hawthorne's story "Young Goodman Brown" ends. (Metropolitan Playhouse, 220 E. 4th St. 995-5302.)

THE SHAPE OF THINGS
Gretchen Mol, Paul Rudd, Rachel Weisz, and Frederick Weller are in the cast of the Almeida Theatre Company staging of Neil LaBute's latest play. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

SHINY HOT NIGHTS: MORE SONGS OF JONI MITCHELL
The performance artist John Kelly stars in a follow-up to his 1997 one-man paean to the singer. Saturdays at 8. (Fez, 380 Lafayette St. 533-2680.)

THE SQUARE
Sixteen short plays by as many playwrights (including Craig Lucas, Mac Wellman, David Henry Hwang, and Alice Tuan) which create a collage of Asian-American life over the past century. Some of them are gems and others more like curiosities, but the evening as a whole, "curated" by the playwright Chay Yew and the director Lisa Peterson, is fascinating. The actors' versatility is impressive; among the fine, vivid cast, Henry Yuk's subtle conviction particularly stands out. Ms. Peterson's direction, a few unnecessary postmodern touches aside, gives each play its due while also placing it in a structure that accommodates its particular time period, theatrical style, emotions, and points made. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

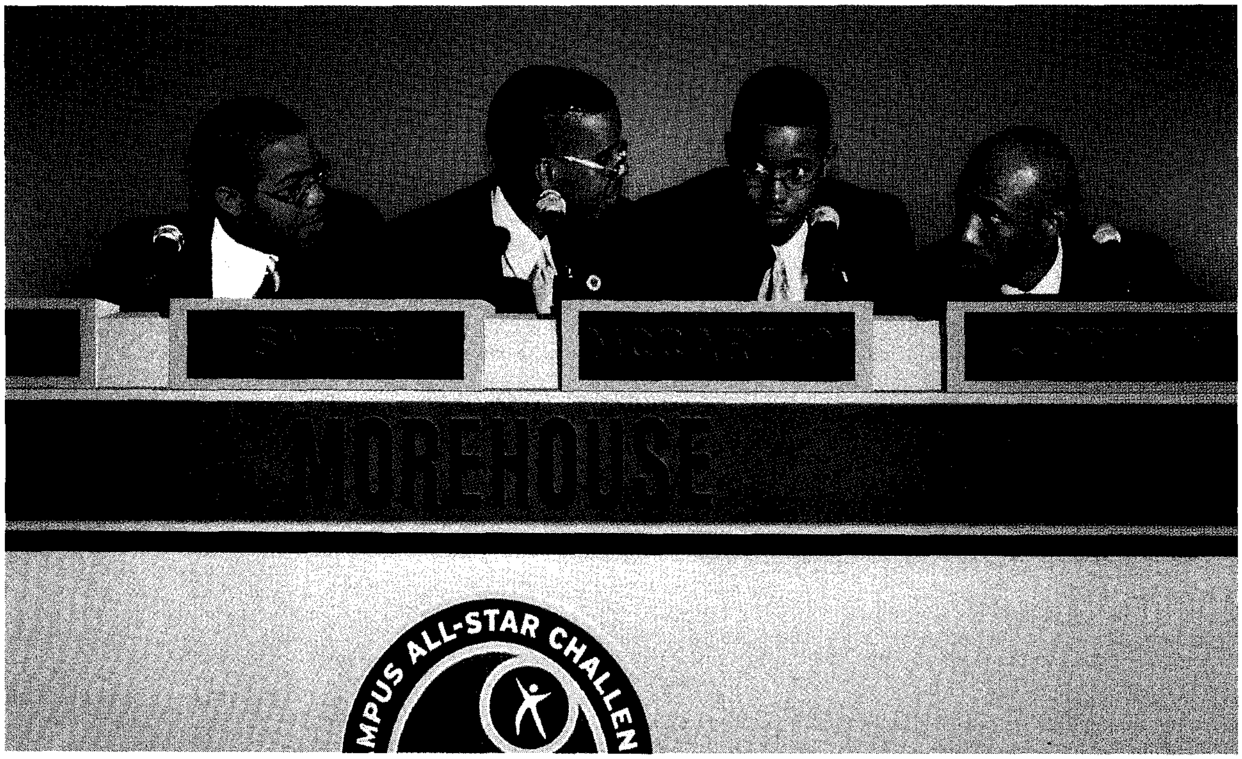
TALE OF 2CITIES: AN AMERICAN JOYRIDE ON MULTIPLE TRACKS
In her latest project, the "standup novelist" Heather Woodbury uses the Dodgers' departure from Brooklyn in 1957 to examine notions of home and community. The final installment in the six-part series is on Nov. 7 at 8. (Brooklyn Lyceum, 227 Fourth Ave., Brooklyn. 718-857-4816.)

THOU SHALT NOT
Susan Stroman is the director of a new musical, based on Zola's "Thérèse Raquin" and set in New Orleans after the Second World War, with a score by Harry Connick, Jr., and a book by David Thompson. (11/5/01) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

TICK, TICK . . . BOOM!
The title represents the late author Jonathan Larson's fear of time running out on his musical dreams. The show is set on the eve of the composer's thirtieth birthday—his Walpurgisnacht—as he is caught between the pressures to succeed and to settle. The slick, hardworking cast of three is well directed by Scott Schwartz, and, with Larson's plotline deftly reworked by David Auburn, the production has a fetching modesty and reveals Larson's idiosyncrasy, energy, and promise. (7/9/01) (Jane Street Theatre, 113 Jane St. 239-6200.)

UNDERNEATH THE LINTEL
A librarian reports mysterious findings from a book a hundred and twenty-three years overdue, in a play by Glen Berger. (Soho Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 239-6200.)

UNWRAP YOUR CANDY
It's hard to imagine what Doug Wright was thinking when he put together this quartet of one-act "dark comedies." (He wrote "Quills," a wickedly funny Grand Guignol take on the Marquis de Sade's institutionalization at Charenton.) The curtain raiser, in which the inner monologues of a piggish theatre audience are broadcast in voice-over (it continues as a running joke between plays), is pretty amusing if you're not similarly piggish. But it soon becomes obvious that this was a preëmptive strike, meant to imply that audi-



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ences might be too dim to get Wright's sensibility. In spite of the excellent cast, the plays that follow, with the exception of one that features a sinister talking fetus who tortures his mother from inside the womb, are not very funny, and they also fail to tap into anything incisive or new or dark about their themes (murder, child rearing, secrets, etc.). (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 353-0303. Closes Nov. 11.)

URINETOWN
The amount of fun to be had at this musical, by Greg Kotis (book and lyrics) and Mark Hollmann (music and lyrics), is in direct proportion to the unpleasantness of its title. Its central idea is that an evil corporation controls all the toilets in a city that bears some resemblance to New York, but you don't have to rack your brains about the ramifications of that any more than the authors did; the show is really no more and no less than a terrifically spirited sendup of musicals and their conventions, as self-conscious and gag-happy as a Warner Bros. cartoon (not only does a sign saying "Secret Hideout" hang above a secret hideout; the sign has an arrow on it). John Cullum, Jeff McCarthy, Nancy Opel, and Spencer Kayden lead the uniformly wonderful cast, which is under the direction of John Rando, and John Carrafa is responsible for the clever musical staging. (10/1/01) (Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

WHERE'S MY MONEY?
John Patrick Shanley's dark comedy about two bush-league divorce lawyers from Brooklyn. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

WONDER OF THE WORLD
A new comedy by David Lindsay-Abaire, starring Sarah Jessica Parker as a runaway housewife with a disturbed husband. Christopher Ashley is the director. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

DANCE

BALLET NACIONAL DE CUBA
The company founded by Alicia Alonso in 1948 offers excerpts from works performed by Alonso the prima ballerina and later adapted by Alonso the choreographer, including portions of "Giselle," "Coppélia," "Don Quixote," and "Swan Lake." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Nov. 8-10 at 8 and Nov. 11 at 3.)

"MASURCA FOGO"
This is Tanztheater Wuppertal lite—springtime in the Theatre of Dejection. A woman in a flowery dress fakes a very long orgasm while suspended above the bodies of several men. Another, raven-haired woman performs a squiggly, knock-kneed solo in place. A line of couples shuffles to a winsome fado. The short spots that make up this two-hour Dada fest are full of vivid thesis statements, but Pina Bausch's posture of weary wisdom—she has known it all already, known it all—makes them forgettable, and our belief or disbelief beside the point. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Nov. 6 and 8 at 8, Nov. 9-10 at 7:30, and Nov. 11 at 3.)

GARTH FAGAN DANCE
The eleven-member troupe premières "Music of the Line / Words in the Shape," set to two John Adams compositions, "Hoodoo Zephyr" and "Violin Concerto." The "Lion King" choreographer also presents repertory works along with recreations and modifications of older pieces. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Nov. 6-10 at 8 and Nov. 11 at 2 and 7:30.)

ELLIS WOOD / LISA RACE
In a shared program, the choreographer Ellis Wood presents "Funktionslust Slut" and Lisa Race offers "Social Climb." (Dance Theatre Workshop at the Duke on 42nd St, 229 W. 42nd St. 924-0077. Nov. 8-10 at 8 and Nov. 11 at 3.)

"ILLUMINATIONS"
Simone Forti, the liveliest of the original mavericks of postmodern dance, began this collaboration in improvisation with Charlemagne Palestine, a composer and pianist in the manner of Steve Reich, in 1971. "I was a little stiffer then," she says. At sixty-six years old, she moves with a voraciousness and vivid intention that suggest she could do anything, but won't if it's only to impress you. In the first decades of the collaboration, Forti would center her improvisation around certain movement patterns. Now she just shows up "in an open state, and I see what comes out of me," she says. "But it's like being a jazz musician. The new piece isn't completely new." (Danspace Project, St. Mark's-In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Nov. 8-10 at 8:30.)

KOREAN MASKED DANCE
The fourteen-member all-male, all-farmer troupe presents excerpts from the masked dramas "Dance of a Leper Clown," "Dance of the Foolish Aristocrats," and "Dance of a Fallen Buddhist Monk." (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Nov. 9 at 8.)

"GROUP EXPERIENCE"
The choreographer Sarah Michelson leads a group of collaborators which includes Miguel Gutierrez, Parker Lutz, Cheryl Thierren, and Adrienne Truscott. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Nov. 8-11 at 8:30.)

DEEPLY ROOTED DANCE THEATRE
The Chicago-based company performs repertory works and presents segments of works to show how the dancers and the choreographers build their pieces together. (Aaron Davis Hall, Convent Ave. at 135th St. 650-7100. Nov. 9-10 at 8.)

"WHEN PUSH COMES TO SHOVE . . . SHOVE!"
The Ellen Stokes Shadle/Dance Works troupe performs "Flair," set to the music of Vivaldi and Propellerheads, "Jump or Dive," to Joe Jackson and Björk, and other works. (Merce Cunningham Studio, 55 Bethune St. 924-0077. Nov. 9 at 9 and Nov. 10-11 at 8.)

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NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

ELVIS COSTELLO & THE CHARLES MINGUS ORCHESTRA
The influence of the blues and the gleefully anarchic spirit that motivated Charles Mingus have long drawn rock and rollers to his music. First there was Joni Mitchell and her 1979 album "Mingus," then there was Hal Willner's 1992 tribute, "Weird Nightmare," which featured everyone from Keith Richards to Chuck D. Having been down this road once (he can be heard on Willner's disk), Costello delivers new lyrics and arrangements of both his own work and that of Mingus. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Nov. 7 at 8.)

NATALIE MERCHANT
In the late eighties and early nineties Merchant achieved fame by giving social activism and humorless piety a plaintive, folksy voice. The former 10,000 Maniacs chanteuse kept a low profile following a 1999 live album, but she's back now with songs from her new release, "Motherland." (Beacon Theatre. Nov. 8 at 8.)

"JAZZ AT THE PENTHOUSE"
If one of the mandates of the Lincoln Center jazz program is to promote up-and-coming talent, then they've certainly met the promise with this performance. The trumpeters Dominick Farinacci, Andrea Lindborg, Jeremy Pelt, and Mike Rodriguez are, to put it nicely, unknowns. With a first-rate rhythm section behind them—the pianist Renee Rosnes, the bassist George Mraz, and the drummer Billy Drummond—the horn players salute two of hard bop's greatest trumpeters, Freddie Hubbard and Lee Morgan, whose 1965 meeting is known as The Night of the Cookers, from the subsequent recording. Stars may be born. (Kaplan Penthouse, Rose Building, Lincoln Center. 721-6500. Nov. 8-10 at 8.)

"THE MISSISSIPPI HILL COUNTRY: A MUSICAL CELEBRATION"
Rare appearances by such old-time blues artists as the guitarist **Jessie Mae Hemphill**, the ninety-seven-year-old drum-and-fife master **Otha Turner**, and the juke-joint denizen **T-Model Ford** are the highlights of this program. **Lucinda Williams, Corey Harris,** the **North Mississippi All Stars,** and the **Jon Spencer Blues Explosion** lead the younger generation's tribute. (Arts at St. Ann's, St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-858-2424. Nov. 9 at 8.)

CESARIA EVORA
A breath of sweet tropical air from São Vicente (a tiny port island off the coast of Senegal), Evora is known as the Barefoot Diva, a reference both to her performance style and to the earthy, laid-back feel of *morna*, the dreamy bossa-nova blues she sings with such passion. (Beacon Theatre. Nov. 9 at 8.)

LUCINDA WILLIAMS
This outstanding and uncategorizable songwriter from Baton Rouge—consider her the spiritual daughter of Robert Johnson and Howlin' Wolf—is touring in support of "Essence," her follow-up to the widely acclaimed "Car Wheels on a Gravel Road." (Beacon Theatre. Nov. 10 at 8.)

TROY CARRIER AND THE ZYDECO CREW
A night of washboards and accordions, southwestern Louisiana style. (Belle Époque, 827 Broadway, at 13th St. For more information, call 685-7597. Nov. 11 at 7:30.)

AEROSMITH
Two generations of hirsute hard rock meet as Aerosmith mounts its umpteenth arena tour with the almost-as-hoary **Cult** in tow. While neither band practices a particularly cutting-edge version of microphone-swinging, decibel-heavy revelry, their professionalism will insure that there's no shortage of fists aloft in the audience. (Madison Square Garden. 307-7171. Nov. 12 at 7:30.)

SHELBY LYNNE
After a career in Nashville which yielded five CDs of pedestrian country pop, Lynne quit Music City and returned to her home town in Alabama. The

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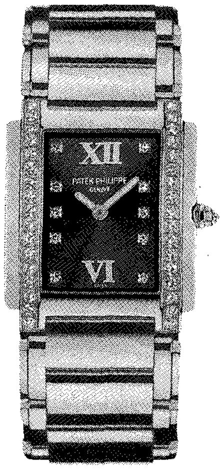

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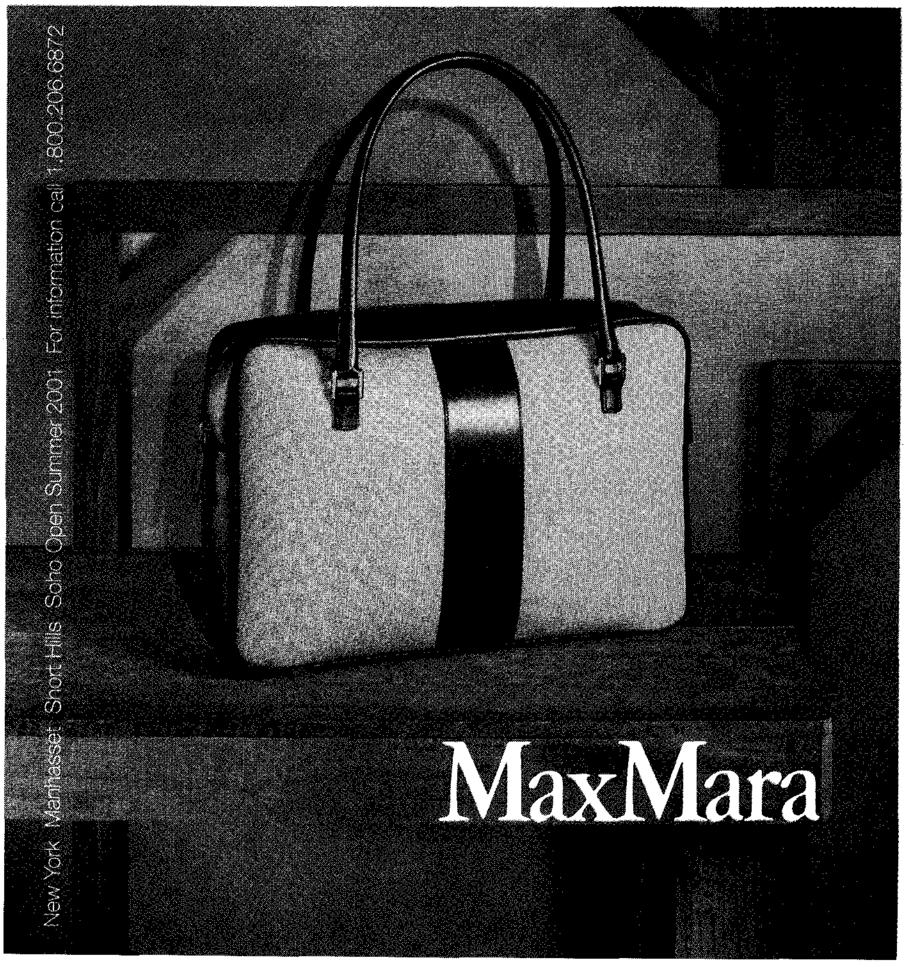
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change did her good. The caterwauling back-porch blues and Memphis horns of her 2000 album, "I Am Shelby Lynne," suggested Al Green at the Grand Ole Opry and earned her a Grammy (for best new artist, ironically). She returns with a shiny follow-up, "Love, Shelby," which was recorded with the help of Alanis Morissette's producer Glen Ballard. (Supper Club, 240 W. 47th St. 921-1940. Nov. 12 at 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BROWNIES
169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—Nov. 13: Once a crucial member of the American punk band Hüsker Dü and of the celebrated alternative trio Sugar, **Bob Mould** more or less gave up the music game after his last solo album, in 1998, to fulfill his passion for professional wrestling. (No joke: he has served as a consultant to the World Championship Wrestling organization.) Mould returns to the stage with his signature fusion of pop melody and noisy venom in a benefit show for the Fire Department's Engine 24, Ladder 5.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Nov. 7-10: **Stereolab** delivers lush and surprisingly human electronica. Nov. 12-13: The proto-punk living legend **Iggy Pop** continues to defy all odds of surviving (much less remaining credible) long after he first assaulted pop culture with the Stooges in the late sixties. Following the unexpectedly solemn chamber music of his 1999 album, "Avenue B," he returns to the ferocious guitar clamor that is his forte. The fifty-four-year-old demigod's new release, "Beat 'Em Up," is proof that no one need go quietly into his autumn years.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Nov. 12-13: The raucous sounds of New Orleans's **ReBirth Brass Band.**

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

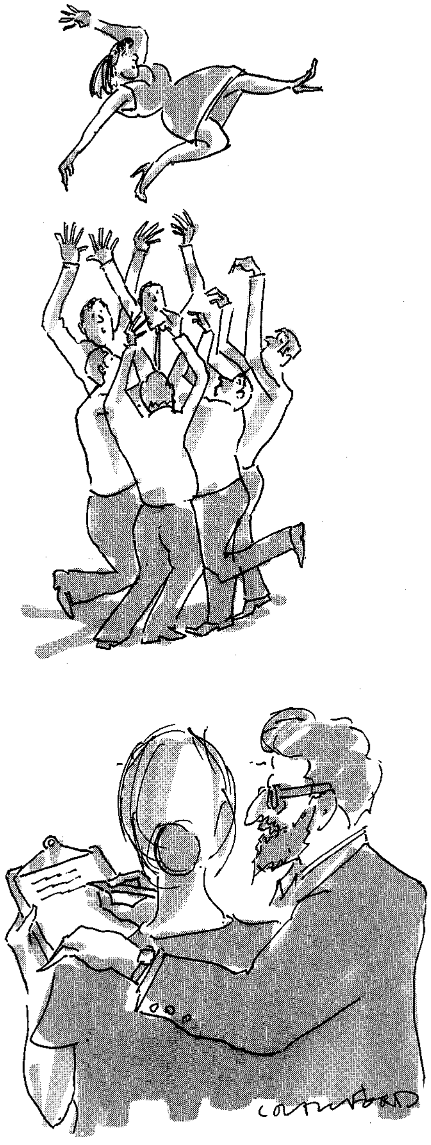
ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Through Dec. 1: Word of mouth is starting to build for **Paula West,** an assured singer of durable standards whose performances have a lived-with ease that eludes many of the pearly-toothed upstarts now crowding the scene. Dining.

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Nov. 7-10: The **John Pizzarelli** trio. Pizzarelli is an exceedingly talented singer, guitarist, and bandleader; he and his sidemen, pianist **Ray Kennedy** and bassist **Martin Pizzarelli,** adore the American-songbook repertoire and pre-bop verities. Even without a drummer in sight, this threesome will have no problem swinging all night long. Dining.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Nov. 11: How does the great Rolling Stones drummer **Charlie Watts** get his satisfaction? From playing jazz. With his main band off the road, Watts rustles up the best of Britain's mainstream jazz players. As a leader, Watts is as self-effacing as he is with the Stones; his modesty and the invariably stellar musicianship of his bandmates always carry the day.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and the magisterially puckish **Bobby Short.** Mondays belong to **Woody Allen** and the **Eddie Davis New Orleans Jazz Band.** ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **Barbara Carroll** is in attendance.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (339-4095)—Nov. 7-24: **Jimmy Webb** and **Paul Williams** are two wonderful songwriters who kept the larders of pop music full during the sixties and seventies. Williams, who also acts—he's the star of Brian DePalma's not-quite-classic 1974 film "Phantom of the Paradise"—may have a slightly higher profile, but Webb has written hits for everyone from the Fifth Dimension and Richard Harris to Glen Campbell and Art Garfunkel. Each is an engaging performer who does credit to his most durable material—"We've Only Just Begun" and "Rainbow Connection," in Williams's case; "Up, Up and Away," "By the Time I Get to Phoenix," and the gloriously inscrutable "MacArthur Park," in Webb's. The singing actress **Liz Callaway** joins them for this engagement. Dining.



"You say 'choreography,' Pina. Your critics say 'fire drill.'" (Tanztheater Wuppertal at BAM.)

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (582-2121)—Through Nov. 11: At eighty, **Illinois Jacquet** may no longer be the Texas tornado of legend, the one-man army whose tenor saxophone was guaranteed to shake a hall to its rafters, but he's still got the spirit in him. His big band is a light-on-its-feet swing unit that does its leader proud. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays through Nov. 18: **Lea Delaria.** Sure, she's as funny as you'd expect, but Delaria, Broadway's favorite comic foil, also gives quite a turn as a feisty jazz-inflected singer. On her current album, "Play It Cool," she and a sharp jazz ensemble reveal the inner swing in theatrical material by the likes of Sondheim, Kander and Ebb, and LaChuisa.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Nov. 13: The **Mario Pavone** sextet. The bassist Pavone is one of the secret heroes of the New York City jazz scene. Lack of widespread recognition hasn't dimmed his ambition or imagination. He juggles different-sized ensembles to fit his compositional needs; no matter the aggregation, sharp arrangements jostle happily with improvisations, and there's always room for plenty of Pavone's own aggressive playing.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Nov. 11: The **Lou Donaldson** quartet. With one foot in well-turned bop soil and the other in R. & B. territory, Donaldson, an alto saxophonist, pledges allegiance to both virtuosity and entertainment. His timing—as a bop soloist and as a comic—has never been better. He's joined here by **Dr. Lonnie Smith** on organ. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—Some artists were not meant for retrospectives. In the case of Paul Signac (1863-1935), an acolyte and understudy of Georges Seurat, faint praise would have been more flattering. The young Signac, a determined avant-gardist of middling talent, hitched himself to Seurat's star in 1884. From then on, he served as cheerleader for their willfully formulaic style. Signac's own Pointillist efforts, especially the placid harbor scenes of the eighteen-nineties, have an appealing kind of stippled, calming brightness. But the artist's twin passions (he was an avid yachtsman and a sentimental anarchist) don't resonate much today, and the later paintings show him gradually growing tired of the method he had done so much to promote. Through Dec. 30. ♦ **"Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Drawings and Prints."** Fifty of Bruegel's sixty-one known drawings, many of them paired with the engravings (by other talented hands) for which they were designs, range from acutely poetic landscapes to surreal fantasies that were influenced by Hieronymus Bosch. While taking the dimmest possible view of human character, he embraced raw human energy with a zest that feels all-forgiving. His landscapes comprehend the grandeur and the scraggliness of nature in equal measure. Through Dec. 2. ♦ For **"Caspar David Friedrich: Moonwatchers,"** the Met presents seventeen paintings and two works on paper, many of which ("Two Men Contemplating the Moon," "Man and Woman Contemplating the Moon," etc.) capture the German artist at his most Romantic. Through Nov. 11. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—An Alberto Giacometti retrospective reacquaints us with the Swiss sculptor's iconic skinny statues while emphasizing his paintings and his less esteemed Surrealist objects of the nineteen-thirties. Revision is not achieved. Except for "The Palace at 4 A.M." and "Woman with Her Throat Cut"—two 1932 marvels that bespeak bolt-from-the-blue inspiration like that of Coleridge's "Kubla Khan"—the objects show Giacometti in a weakly pandering mode. The paintings, mostly portraits from the nineteen-fifties, expend obsessive energy to visu-

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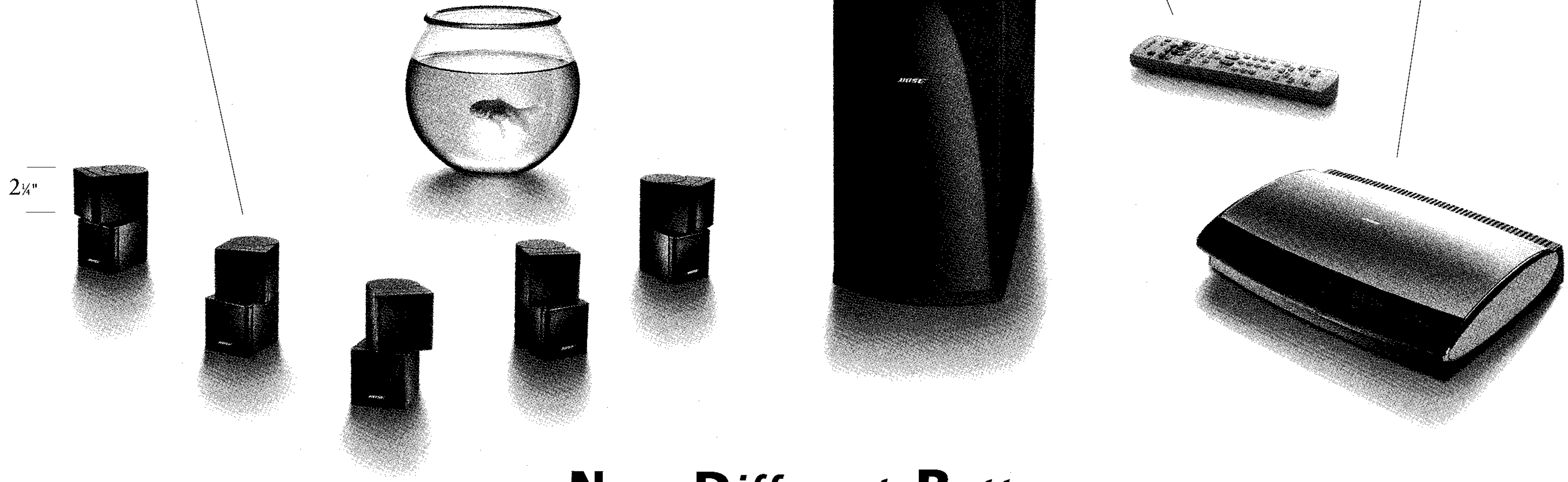

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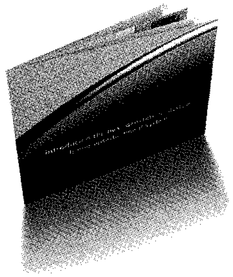

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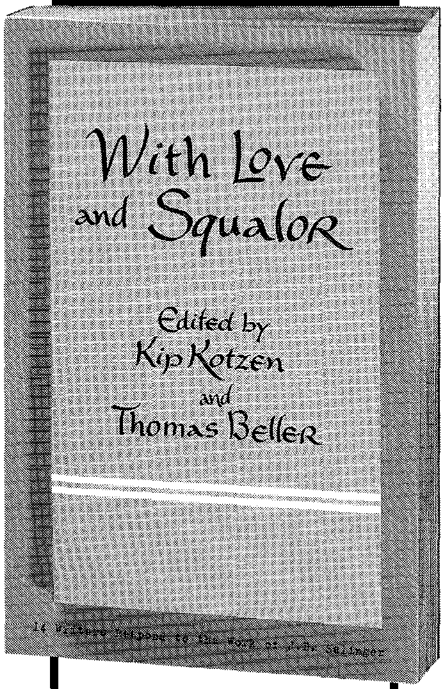
With Love and Squalor
Edited by Kip Kotzen and Thomas Beller
14 Writers Respond to the Work of J.D. Salinger

Contributors include:

THOMAS BELLER

AIMEE BENDER

WALTER KIRN

JANE MENDELSOHN

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JOEL STEIN

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ally skimpy ends. But the great statues are more engaging than ever. These tragicomic presences don't so much stand in the world as stand up to it, ravaged by the very space around them but maintaining vestigial subjectivity in the thrust of a chin, the tilt of a hip, and the set of a shoulder—calling to the heart. Through Jan. 8. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—For **"Brazil: Body & Soul"** the Thomas Krens team has gone to new extremes, utterly transforming the museum and leaving one awed by the mega-exhibition's scope, design, audacity, and cost. Under the direction of Jean Nouvel, the entire interior has been painted black, and the rotunda is now a Stygian theatre, with a massive baroque altarpiece in its center. From there, viewers ascend past ranks of polychromed Madonnas, carved lions, ex-votos, and tribal videos and arrive, finally, at a celestial ring of white rooms, where the baroque (which lasted nearly three centuries in Brazil) abruptly gives way to modernism. After so much blood and gold, the twentieth century's primary colors are both a relief and a disappointment (the change is like stepping from purgatory to preschool). In both sections, masterpieces are scarce: judging by this survey, Brazilians, like Guggenheim curators, prefer spectacle to refinement. Through Jan. 27. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—**"Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art, 1964-1977."** When the first movie theatres were built in Japan, the seats were installed sidewise, because architects were sure the beam of light streaming from the projector would be as exciting to watch as the image onscreen. This historical survey explores a similar impulse in American art, focussing on early experimentation with film projections, as well as sound, live video feeds, and holography. The curator Chrissie Iles knows that today's audience equates projection with the MTV glamour of Doug Aitken or Sam Taylor-Wood, which may be why she opens with a Warhol split-screen projection of Edie Sedgwick that has the opulent banality of Buñuel. But the double Edie gives way to a double Dan Graham (the two-part projection "Helix/Spiral") and from that point the emphasis is on projection as radical experiment rather than high-gloss entertainment. Through Jan. 6. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, Fridays, 1 to 9.)

DIA CENTER FOR THE ARTS
548 W. 22nd St. (989-5566)—Roni Horn titled a recent show "Making Being Here Enough," which sums up the considerable gift of her art; your experience of a given piece and its meaning are inseparable. Of the three photographic projects and two sculptures on view, the sculptures steal the show. A pair of glass blocks, one crystal clear, the other black ice, are installed in separate galleries. Each appears uncannily liquid, as if melting in sunlight. Duality strikes again at the entrance to the show, with two groups of nearly identical portraits of the same young girl. As she gazes straight at you, a chameleon changing from picture to picture yet always herself, your sense of identity itself dissolves. Through Feb. 17. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

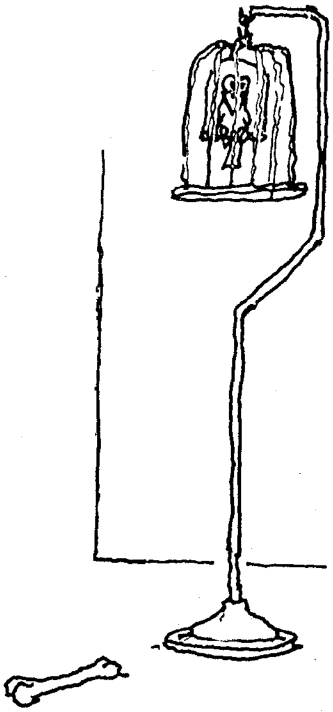
NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W. (873-3400)—For many years, John Koch was an embarrassment to American painting. A mustachioed, bald, epicene aesthete, Koch painted cocktail parties in his elegant El Dorado apartment with finicky, European finesse. He was the un-Pollock, the Meissonier of Central Park West. Even today, his art remains a litmus test for diehard modernists. For the rest of us, though, this retrospective is a long-overdue pleasure. The fifty interiors, gilded by typically Kochian late-afternoon sunlight, are full of marvellous touches, often rising to Degas-like perfection. Koch's occasional forays into erotica are less compelling, though he did paint one unforgettably libidinous icon: "The Sculptor," a hymn to male pulchritude that would have made Liberace blush. Through Jan. 27. ♦ **"Manhattan Unfurled"** matches great panoramas of the New York skyline—the artist Edward Burkhardt's 360-degree views, from the eighteen-forties, and the architect Matteo Pericoli's perimeter views of the entire city from the Hudson and the East Rivers, a project he worked on from 1995 to 2000. Through Jan. 6. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—The Canadian artist Janet Cardiff is best known for site-specific audio works created in collaboration with George Bures Miller, guided walks in which viewers (make that listeners) don headphones and follow the artist's instructions in a sort of aural treasure hunt. This mid-career retrospective features an eleven-minute journey through P.S. 1 and also includes soundtracks of tours past—through a Swedish castle, a German street, a library in Pittsburgh—which can be heard while seated at a desk. (The walking experience is better.) The show, which also includes a number of video-based works, culminates in the première of a stunning audio installation of a forty-part choral work by Thomas Tallis, composed in 1575. Through Jan. 20. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

GALLERIES–UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

RICHARD ESTES
The most respectable Photo-Realist—because he paints freehand, rather than tracing projected slides—returns with big views of Manhattan streets and international tourist sites (the Paris Opéra, Machu Picchu) and a portrait of I. M. Pei. As ever, Estes is strikingly adept at rendering hard surfaces that reflect light and is lost when confronted with soft stuffs, like flesh and foliage, that mostly absorb it. Why does he even attempt people? There is nothing to look at in his faces except a numbly notational technique that employs oil paint in dry, opaque patches, as if it were gouache. Pei, grinning in the National Gallery annex that he designed, becomes a human cipher. Through Nov. 24. (Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900.)



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"NAKED SINCE 1950"
A munificent mosh pit of a show convenes images of unclothedness by forty celebrated artists, from Hopper and Picasso to Goldin and Currin. The over-all effect is unpleasant and very exciting. (Bring a friend to chatter with.) The show's orchestrated clash of strong works—contending over the bare body like predators over prey—withers the analytic impulse. Forget Sir Kenneth Clark's elegant worrying about "naked" vs. "nude"; think "stark." High points include Lucian Freud's lush and pitiless "Naked Portrait with Green Chair"; a lugubrious family of nudists photographed by Diane Arbus; Eric Fischl's well-known painting "The Old Man's Boat and the Old Man's Dog" (at nineteen years old, a grownup classic); and a wax sculpture of buttocks with real hair and painted musical bars by Robert Gober. Some matchups amaze. A magenta girlie-girl by Lisa Yuskavage holds its own on a wall with Picasso and de Kooning. Through Dec. 8. (C&M Arts, 45 E. 78th St. 861-0020.)

"ROY LICHTENSTEIN BRUSHSTROKES: FOUR DECADES"
A large show offers "Brushstroke" paintings and drawings from the estate of the white prince of Pop. Lichtenstein first filleted a stroke in 1965, lifting the representation of a big, juicy gesture from a comic book. It seemed a keen joke on Abstract Expressionism, which he had halfheartedly practiced in the nineteen-fifties. (The show includes one interesting mess he made in 1959.) The plot thickened in 1981, when Lichtenstein started adding freehand strokes of his own to those that he portrayed schematically. He kept ringing bright and subtle changes on the motif until his death, in 1997. The resulting, richly complex body of work is amusing to the mind and a flat-out joy to the eye. Through Jan. 12. (Mitchell-Inness & Nash, 1018 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 744-7400.)

Short List

DAVID HOCKNEY AND HENRI MATISSE
Artemis Greenberg Van Doren,
730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 445-0444.
Through Nov. 10.

ELYN ZIMMERMAN
Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St.
744-2313. Through Nov. 10.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

KIM ABELES
When Abeles stopped making beautiful and sought-after kimonos in the early nineteen-eighties, she says, "a lot of people were upset and became disloyal. I just wanted to keep experimenting like artists should." She has moved pointedly from genre to genre ever since, working in painting, photography, bookmaking, sculpture, and installation. This retrospective collects her eclectic reinterpretations of science and history, including pieces on the air quality in Los Angeles, on the execution of the Rosenbergs, and on the canonization of St. Bernadette. "Traveling Sales" packs Bernadette's story, in the form of commercially produced miniatures and postcards, into a vintage suitcase touched up with gold paint and a purple velvet handle. Through Nov. 17. (Art Resources Transfer, 210 Eleventh Ave., at 25th St. 691-5956.)

CELESTE BOURSIER-MOUGENOT
On your way through Chelsea, stop at the corner of Tenth Avenue and 21st Street, face west, and wave. Boursier-Mougenot has three cameras pointed there, with two more along 21st Street, broadcasting live onto five big screens at Paula Cooper's upstairs space. Like Wolfgang Staehle's live video feed of the downtown skyline, which unexpectedly recorded the attacks on the World Trade Center, "Videodrones" picks up telling details of the current climate, such as the unsettling number of parked taxis, which in happier times would be out on the streets scouting for fares. The score, created by feeding the videos through a sound-generating system, is not as immediately appealing as in other works by Boursier-Mougenot (for instance, his gently chiming bowls floating in wading pools last summer), but the drone grows on you. Through Dec. 15. (521 W. 21st St. 255-1105.)

JAMES CROAK
The seven-foot-four sentinel at the door, "Dirtman Shows the Monsters," is made of cast dirt and holds a wooden rack of gargoyles. Nearby, another dark (in aspect and color) human figure cast in dirt climbs across a ceiling while similar creatures made of wax drip and melt through a hole in the bottom of their aquarium. In the next room, "Wolf" pads across a wide pedestal built from a truckload of books, marked with a trail of tar. And "Score," an All American Scoreboard Model MP-5209 made in Pardeeville, Wisconsin, gives the following (hopeful?) update: fourth quarter, 14:59 left, Wolves 7, Theory 0. Through Nov. 10. (Stux, 529 W. 20th St. 352-1600.)

ROBERT FISCHER
A ramshackle structure with tin siding hovers between utility and futility in the middle of the gallery. Pastoral but creepy, it's a Ted Kaczynski-like take on the little house on the prairie. The interior furnishings (in two rooms, and a pair of tiny hallways) are a study in domestic dysfunction: the leaves of a drop-leaf table add a scant inch to its length and a built-in ladder leads nowhere. The hum of an electric fan conveys recent occupancy and lends an illicit air to the experience. For all its material charms, the installation has the spectral aspect of a memory. Through Nov. 17. (Dee Glasoe, 529 W. 20th St. 924-7545.)

ELLIOTT GREEN
Green's paintings offer a kind of harrassing solace. Precincts of sweet, sleek, reassuring color—plums, aquas, oranges—are inhabited by squabbling figures, apparently tots and parents in various stages of distress. The result is an evocative version of near-abstraction, late de Kooning filtered through the mind of Chuck Jones. Long, rubbery limbs are everywhere, attached to feet and hands that clutch, slap, kick, and stomp. In one of the show's most irresistible images, a thumb and forefinger loom out as if to offer the viewer a pinch. Through Nov. 10. (Postmasters, 459 W. 19th St. 727-3323.)

FRANK HOLLIDAY
For sheer gaudiness and abandon, this show, "Trippin' in America," is in a class by itself. Looking nothing like Holliday's earlier work, the new paintings are big, gooey, rainbow-colored lava fields, blotto versions of Gerhard Richter or Frank Stella. They're essentially goofs—abstract improvisation raised to a kind of cheerful hyperbole, a parody of itself. But they're also surprisingly fun to look at, and a sure mood elevator. Through Nov. 17. (Debs, 525 W. 26th St. 643-2070.)

JENNY HOLZER
Who's afraid of red, yellow and blue? Not Jenny Holzer, who inaugurates Cheim & Read's new space, with three primary-colored L.E.D. sculptures so well married to the architecture that it's hard to accept their impermanence. In the front room, four narrow stainless-steel spikes rise to a height of more than twenty-four feet, spouting blue text of the discomforting variety for which the artist is best known. The next two rooms are empty of objects, with signage installed in the ceiling. Through Nov. 17. (547 W. 25th St. 242-7727.)

Short List

JEREMY BLAKE
Feigen, 535 W. 20th St. 929-0500.
Through Nov. 24.

MORRIS LOUIS
Kasmin, 293 Tenth Ave., at 26th St. 563-4474.
Through Nov. 24.

ELIZABETH PEYTON
Gavin Brown's Enterprise, 436 W. 15th St.
627-5258. Through Nov. 17.

RICHARD SERRA
Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 741-1111.
Through Dec. 15.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

ANN AGEE
Agee trained as a painter but took to ceramics some fifteen years ago, decorating her plates, pans, and plumbing with delicate blue-and-white scenes of suburban America. An encounter with Franz Anton Bustelli's colorful, gilded porcelain figurines from the sixteenth century set her on her current path, modelling small, brightly clothed contemporary men and women. Most recently, she's taken on scenes with multiple subjects, like the Lamaze-class and home-birth tableaux here. These fecundity dramas are as perfectly formed and intricately patterned as her single figures, but they (and Agee's accompanying medical models of male and female genitalia) may not have the same easy-to-love, easy-to-sell appeal. Through Nov. 10. (P.P.O.W, 476 Broome St. 941-8642.)

NANCY CHUNN
For her 1996 "Front Pages," Chunn colored in 366 New York *Times* front pages ('96 was a leap year), adding color-coded road-sign and stick-figure graphics onto the page. The lusher and more selective "News Stories" now uses the same technique to mark major events of the past few years, like the cloning of Dolly the sheep, the death of Deng Xiaoping, and the end of the Heaven's Gate cult. By 1999, Chunn had moved her symbol language to canvas, struggling to fit the detritus of the Monica Lewinsky scandal onto a six-by-eight-foot surface. "Spring Cleaning" bundles the war in Kosovo, the Columbine massacre, and the last "Star Wars" movie around a set of crossing light sabres; the prescient "All Fall Down" shows an airplane and a crowd of angels hovering over crushed and burning buildings. Through Nov. 10. (Feldman, 31 Mercer St. 226-3232.)

PIETER SCHOOLWERTH
Leggy twenty-somethings sprawl and dance and flirt their way through Schoolwerth's manic canvases, which suggest a psychedelic episode of "Friends." There are pets and beer cans and fashion glossies underfoot and everyone is having an enviably good time. Schoolwerth's technique, meanwhile, seems nonchalantly old-fashioned: it's a photo-enhanced realism, bordering on illustration. What secures our affections is Schoolwerth's combination of high spirits and artificiality: at best, his gravityless tableaux promise to become purely balletic and unreal, like East Village versions of Guido Reni. Through Nov. 10. (American Fine Art, 22 Wooster St. 941-0401.)

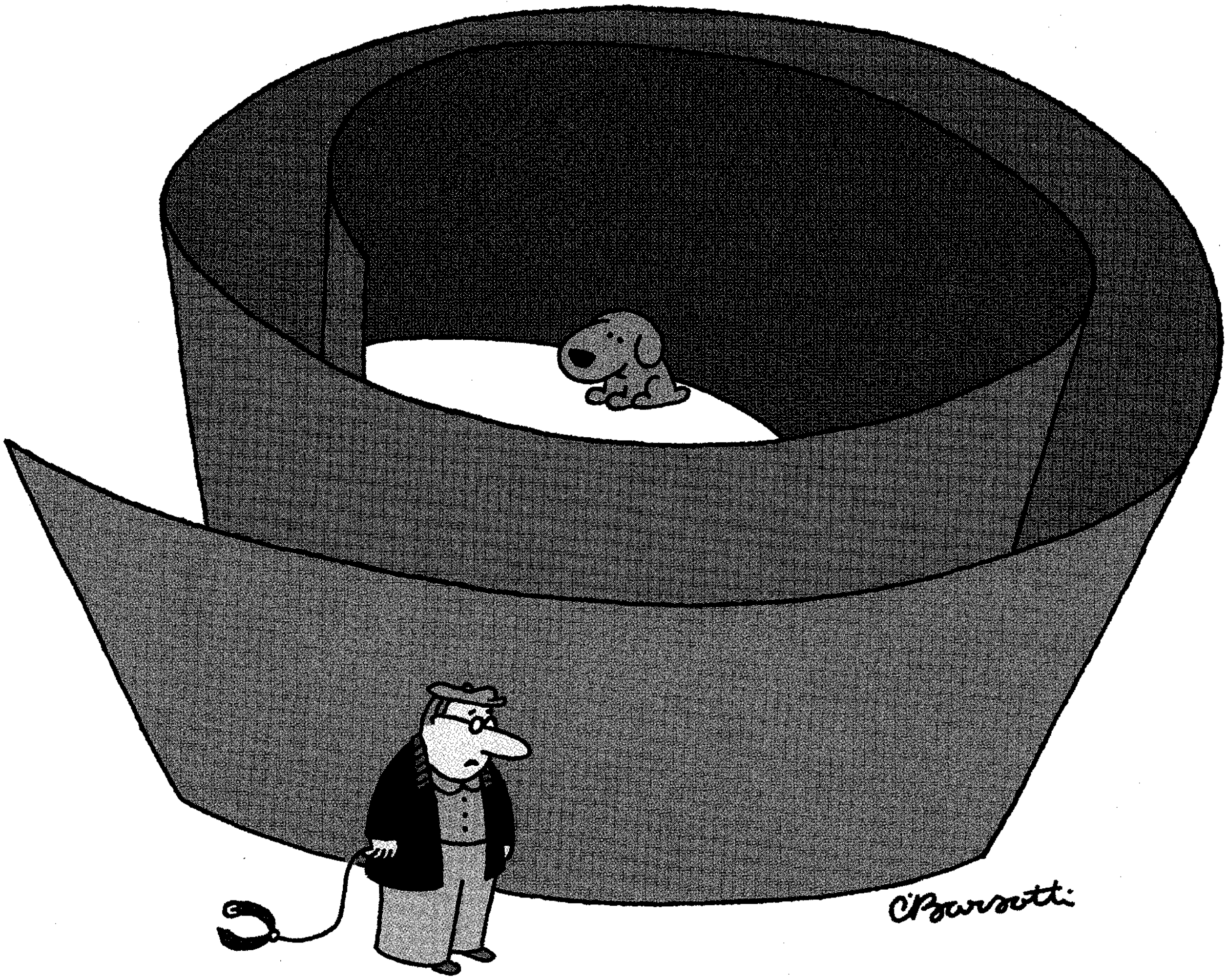
Short List

KEITH SONNIER
Location One, 26 Greene St. 334-3347.
Through Nov. 28.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
Nov. 7 at 7: The house's sale of Impressionist and modern art opens with a rich selection of works by major artists. Paintings by Braque, Matisse, Pissarro, and Modigliani (the portrait "Giovanotto dai Capelli Rossi," expected to bring up to seven million dollars) are featured; among the sculptures are works by Giacometti, Archipenko, and Rodin. ♦ Nov. 8 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: Part 2 of the sale features paintings by such artists as Klee, Nicholson, Cézanne, and Feininger ("Small Blue Locomotive," a painting from 1909). ♦ Nov. 9 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: Furniture and decorative art works from the nineteenth century. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
Nov. 7 at 10 A.M. and 2: Impressionist and modern art works, featuring paintings by Monet ("Tempête à Belle-Île," from 1886) and Seurat and sculpture by Jean Arp. The afternoon session includes a selection of works on paper by Kandinsky and others. ♦ Nov. 13 at 7 and Nov. 14 at 10 A.M.: Eu-



"Rusty?" (Richard Serra at Gagosian.)

ropean and American postwar art, including fifteen German works (from the Hans Grothe collection) by such artists as Baselitz and Kiefer. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)

DOYLE

Nov. 7 at 10 A.M.: Autographs, photographs, and theatrical memorabilia. Two collections are the highlights of the sale: a cache of more than seven hundred autographs that belonged to the photographer Alfred Eisenstaedt, and the personal collection of Colleen Dewhurst and George C. Scott. ♦ Nov. 7 at 1: Old Master, modern, and contemporary prints. ♦ Nov. 13 at 10 A.M.: Art works and design from the twentieth century, including paintings by David Hockney and Winston Churchill. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730.)

PHILLIPS

Nov. 12 at 7 and Nov. 13 at 10 A.M.: Contemporary art, including works by Jean-Michel Basquiat, Jeff Koons ("Fait d'Hiver," a porcelain sculpture from the artist's "Banality" series), and Piero Manzoni. (3 W. 57th St. 570-4830.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

HARRY BENSON

When "I Want to Hold Your Hand" hit No. 1 in the U.S., the Beatles picked up a slot on the "Ed Sullivan Show"; the night they learned the news, at the Hotel George V in Paris, Harry Benson was there. His photographs of the ensuing pillow fight have weathered reproduction well—a new print of the best composed and best known of that series is the largest item in this small retrospective. In the years following the British Invasion, Benson covered many more serious and less hopeful cultural turning points, including the deaths of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy. But he always returned to entertainment, notably following another pop star into the bedroom in 1997, this time to offer up the singer Michael Jackson with his plump infant son. Jackson *père*, caught handing off a pacifier to someone outside the frame, is splayed across a gold throne, in a pearl-studded jacket, black pants, and wrinkled white socks. It is to Benson's great credit that the Man in the Mirror looks so human. Through Dec. 1. (Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. 966-6223.)

ANNA GASKELL

With an iconography that hints at fetishism, Gaskell's dark photographs follow several Alice-in-Wonderland-like preteens, in identical outfits. Their adventures—outdoor and indoor scenes that look something like summer camp, or life at an institution—are open to interpretation but always seem to involve fear, taboo, and burgeoning sexuality. One surreal image shows six girls lying face down in a circle, leaving the viewer to struggle for a necessarily far-fetched explanation: Is this a séance? Is it a virginal sacrifice? Gaskell, who was once an assistant-cum-babysitter for Sally Mann, offers one of the few substantial explorations of the sexuality of little girls since Mann's hotly controversial "At Twelve" (1991). Her work is growing more mannered and masterfully uneasy. Through Nov. 10. (Kaplan, 416 W. 14th St. 645-7335.)

NIKKI S. LEE

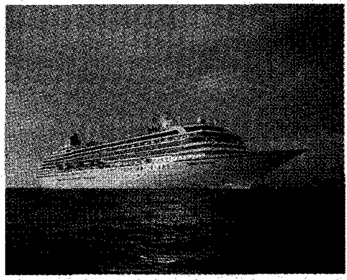
Finally, an heir to Cindy Sherman who captures the vitality of Sherman's early self-portraits. Lee, a young Korean woman just out of art school, stages and poses for faux candids, alone and at the center of snapshotlike images of groups, from strippers to schoolgirls to skateboard punks. She always seems completely engrossed in her casually close crowd scenes, whether she is with a cluster of Asian high-school girls gossiping or a carful of African-American teen-agers arguing over which way to go. Viewers may be sorry to realize the intimacy is pure setup, or sorry to get Lee's point, that hair style, dress, and context are so much of who we are, but there's cheer in her virtuosic performances. Through Dec. 1. (Tonkonow, 535 W. 22nd St. 255-8450.)

NICHOLAS NIXON

Nixon made a name for himself with annual portraits of his wife and her siblings, "The Brown Sisters," a project begun in 1975. For the past two years he has been photographing Boston couples from outside his family. The pictures are less portraits of two static individuals than studies of two bodies merging. One closeup of an entwined pair looks like a detail of the Vatican's sculpture of Laocoön fighting off snakes. "S.P., M.P., Roxbury" is dominated by the head of a woman smiling with her eyes closed, her cheek resting on her obscured partner's temple. The eight-by-ten-inch black-and-white contact prints offer an almost claustrophobic level of detail, reminding the viewer how remarkable it is that Nixon did all this work with a cumbersome and obtrusive view camera. Through Nov. 24. (Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. 857-0000—**Helmut Newton** was most recently in the spotlight with the 2000 release of his sixty-six-pound book, "Sumo," which came with its own Philippe Starck table. He's back with this retrospective. Through Dec. 30. ♦ **"The Construction of the Paris Opera: Photographs of Delmaet and Durandelle"** and **" 'Greed' and Other Recent Acquisitions"** will also be on show through Dec. 30. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)



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Short List

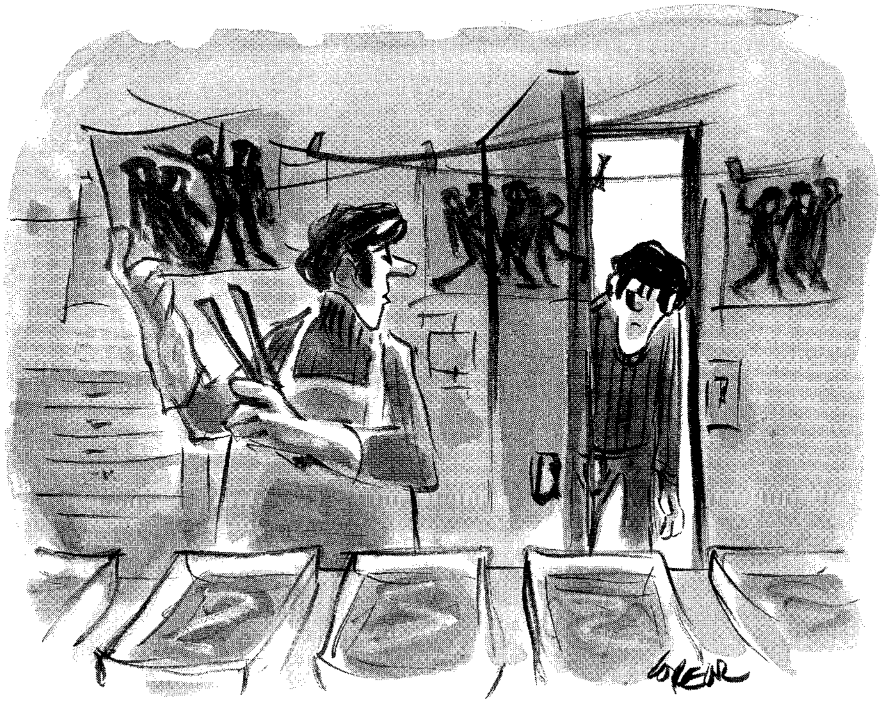
HELMUT NEWTON
Boone, 745 Fifth Ave. 752-2929.
Through Dec. 21.
JOEL MEYEROWITZ
Meyerowitz, 580 Broadway. 625-3434.
Through Dec. 15.
SARAH MOON
Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010.
Through Dec. 8.

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Verdi's **"Luisa Miller,"** with Marina Mescheriakova, Denyce Graves, Neil Shicoff, Nikolai Putilin, Hao Jiang Tian, and Phillip Ens; James Levine conducts. (Nov. 7 at 7:30 and Nov. 13 at 8.) ♦ With Sondra Radvanovsky and Wendy White replacing Mescheriakova and Graves, and Martin Thompson and Paul Plishka replacing Shicoff and Ens. (Nov. 10 at 8.) ♦ **"La Bohème,"** with Patricia Racette, Inva Mula, Ramón Vargas, and Bruno Caproni; Carlo Rizzi. (Nov. 8 at 8.) ♦ **"La Traviata,"** with June Anderson, Vinson Cole, and Juan Pons; Maurizio Benini. (Nov. 9 at 8 and Nov. 12 at 7:30.) ♦ **"Madama Butterfly,"** with Fiorenza Cedolins, Jane Bunnell, Richard Margison, and Kim Josephson; Marco Armiliato. (Nov. 10 at 1:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)
NEW YORK CITY OPERA
Monteverdi's **"The Return of Ulysses,"** with Phyllis Pancella, Katharine Goeldner, Stephen Powell, and David Adams; the conductor is Daniel Beckwith. (Nov. 7 at 7:30.) ♦ **"Turandot,"** with Nina Warren, Oksana Krovytska, Carl Tanner, and David Michael; George Manahan. (Nov. 8 at 7:30 and Nov. 10 at 8.) ♦ **"The Magic Flute,"** performed in English, with Alexandra Coku, Helen Todd, David Adams, Kevin Burdette, John Marcus Bindel, and Joel Sorensen; Steven Mosteller. (Nov. 9 at 8.) ♦ James Robinson's production of **"La Bohème"**—a leaner, more daring treatment than the Met's—returns from last season, with Maria Kanyova, Adina Aaron, Barton Green, and Frank Hernandez; Brent McMunn. (Nov. 10 at 1:30 and Nov. 13 at 7:30.) ♦ The stage première of **"Lilith,"** a new opera by Deborah Drattell which imagines a meeting between Eve and Adam's first wife. With Beth Clayton (in the title role), Lauren Flanigan (as Eve), Dana Beth Miller, Marcus DeLoach, and Tom Nelis; George Manahan. (Nov. 11 at 1:30.) (New York State Theatre. 307-4100.)
OPERA ORCHESTRA OF NEW YORK: "LA BATTAGLIA DI LEGNANO"
Eve Queler conducts a rare performance (in concert form) of Verdi's patriotic opera from 1849, with the singers Krassimira Stoyanova, Francisco Casanova, Vitalij Kowaljow, and Carlo Guelfi. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Nov. 13 at 8.)
OPERAS ON THE EDGE
Three daring productions. Nov. 7 and Nov. 9-10 at 7:30 and Nov. 11 at 3: The Brooklyn Academy of Music presents **"Once Upon a Time in Chinese America,"** a music-theatre piece based on Chinese legend with a martial-arts corps de ballet, by the radical socialist jazz composer Fred Ho. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.) ♦ Nov. 7-10 at 8: Leroy Jenkins's multimedia jazz opera **"Three Willies,"** with a libretto by Homer Jackson, receives its New York première at the Kitchen. Set in a family living room during the 1988 Presidential campaign, it uses the notorious "Willie Horton" TV ad to explore the charged relationships among three generations of black men. (512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Through Nov. 17.) ♦ Nov. 13 at 7:30: The New York première of **"Black Water,"** John Duffy's operatic treatment of Ted Kennedy's Waterloo, Chappaquiddick; Joyce Carol Oates wrote the libretto, based on her 1969 novel. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. 279-4200.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Sarah Chang brings her personal charm and high-impact playing to Berg's Violin Concerto; Kurt Masur conducts, filling out the program with Bruckner's Symphony No. 9. (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500. Nov. 8-10 at 8 and Nov. 13 at 7:30.)
ANNE-SOPHIE MUTTER AT CARNEGIE HALL
This supremely elegant and persuasive violinist's latest New York programs find her in traditional repertory, but with a twist: as both soloist and



"Well, I don't care if Ringo doesn't like his nose."
(Harry Benson's photographs of the Beatles and others at Staley-Wise.)

leader. Nov. 7 at 8: Mutter plays Mozart's Violin Concertos Nos. 1, 2, and 5 (the "Turkish"), with the Camerata Salzburg. ♦ Nov. 8 at 8: Another all-Mozart program, including the Violin Concertos Nos. 3 and 4 and the Sinfonia Concertante for Violin and Viola (with the violist Yuri Bashmet). ♦ Nov. 9 at 8: Mutter leads the Trondheim Soloists, a young chamber group from Norway, in music by Grieg ("Two Nordic Melodies") along with violin concertos by Tartini and Vivaldi ("The Four Seasons"). (247-7800.)

HELSINKI PHILHARMONIC

Finland's preëminent orchestra, led by Leif Segerstam (a conductor-composer known for his exciting and unconventional performances), presents Sibelius's immense "Kullervo" Symphony—Finnish music's first masterpiece, now a hundred and ten years old. Monica Groop and Jorma Hynninen are the vocal soloists, with the Polytech Choir of Helsinki; the choral version of "Finlandia" completes the program. (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500. Nov. 11 at 3.)

ORPHEUS CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

The Los Angeles Guitar Quartet joins the ensemble for a program of Rodrigo (the "Concerto Andaluz," for four guitars), Turina, and Ginastera's "Variaciones Concertantes," a sophisticated celebration of the gaucho music of Argentina. (92nd St. Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5500. Nov. 10 and Nov. 14 at 8.)

"Power to the balcony Rows N to Z!" (Three radical operas at the Kitchen, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and Cooper Union.)

RECITALS

JOHN O'CONOR

The Irish pianist offers a recital featuring music from home (the Nocturne No. 6 by John Field, who invented the genre) and far away (Scriabin's Nocturne for the Left Hand, and Ginastera's "Danzas Argentinas"). Music by Chopin and Schubert (the Four Impromptus, D. 899) complete the program. (Walter Reade Theatre, 165 W. 65th St. 721-6500. Nov. 11 at 11 A.M.)

SONIC BOOM FESTIVAL 10

A host of New York's best perfomers (including Continuum, the Da Capo Chamber Players, the singers Lucy Shelton and Mary Nessinger, and the accordion player William Schimmel) present this all-evening event at the Knitting Factory, considered by some to be the country's leading festival of contemporary music. The composers represented (many of whom enjoy premières) include Ursula Mamlok, Elliott Carter, Sofia Gubaidulina, Kaija Saariaho. (74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. 219-3006. Nov. 11 at 5.)

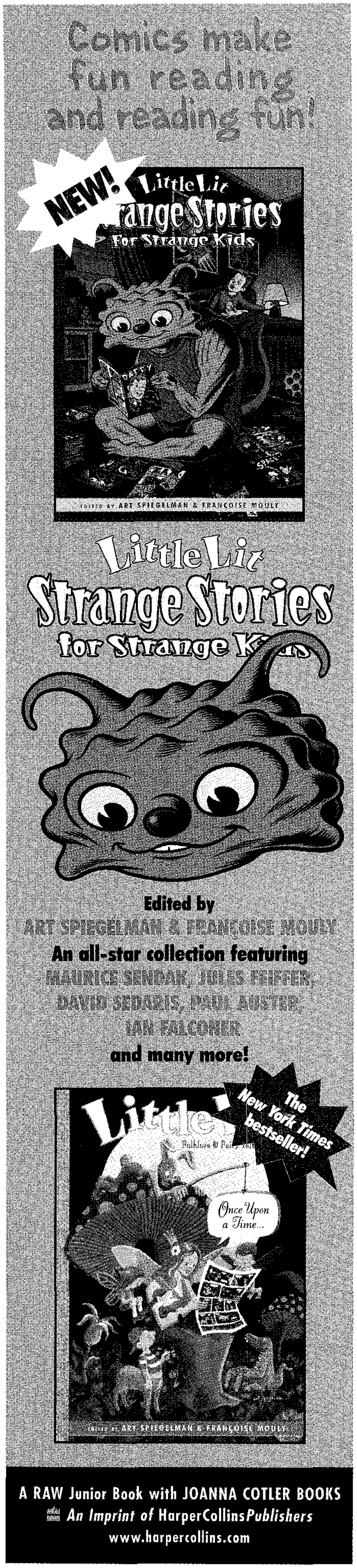
ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS

Nov. 7 at 6:30: By Diane Ackerman, from her latest book, "Cultivating Delight: A Natural History of My Garden." (The Horticultural Society of New York, 128 W. 58th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Nov. 7 at 8: Lou Reed, Dr. John, and Jimmy Scott join the author Peter Guralnick, the producer Hal Willner, and other musicians and writers for an evening of words and music by Doc Pomus, the late, esteemed rhythm-and-blues songwriter who was born Jerome Felder in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, in 1925. (Poetry Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-0910.) ♦ Nov. 11 at 2: By the journalist Robert Sullivan, from "The Meadowlands: Wilderness Adventures on the Edge of a City." (Wave Hill, 249th St. at Independence Ave., the Bronx. 718-549-3200.) ♦ Nov. 12 at 8: By the poets Yusef Komunyakaa and Philip Levine, from their work. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5500.)

TALKS

Nov. 8 at 6:30: The artist Naima Rauam, who has long painted scenes of the Fulton Fish Market, talks about working with the winter light. (South Street Seaport Museum, 14 Fulton St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Nov. 13 at 7:30: Kirk Varnedoe, the chief curator for the Department of Painting and Sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art, offers a lecture titled "The Ruins of the Tuileries, 1870-1882: The Aesthetics of Shock and Memory." (La Maison Française, New York University, 16 Washington Mews. For more information, call 998-8750.)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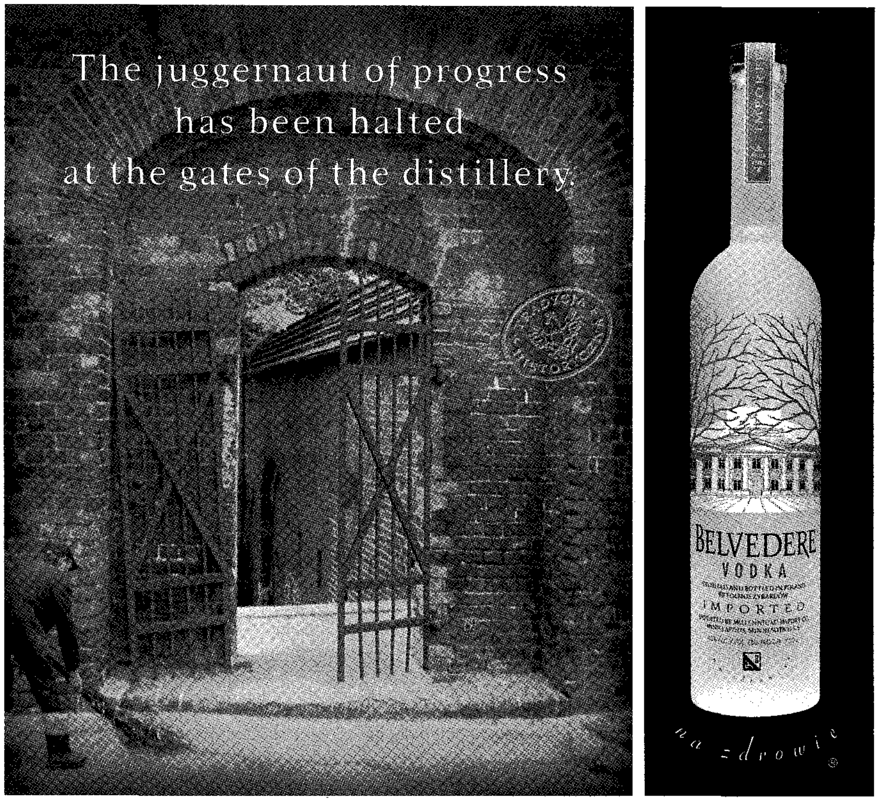

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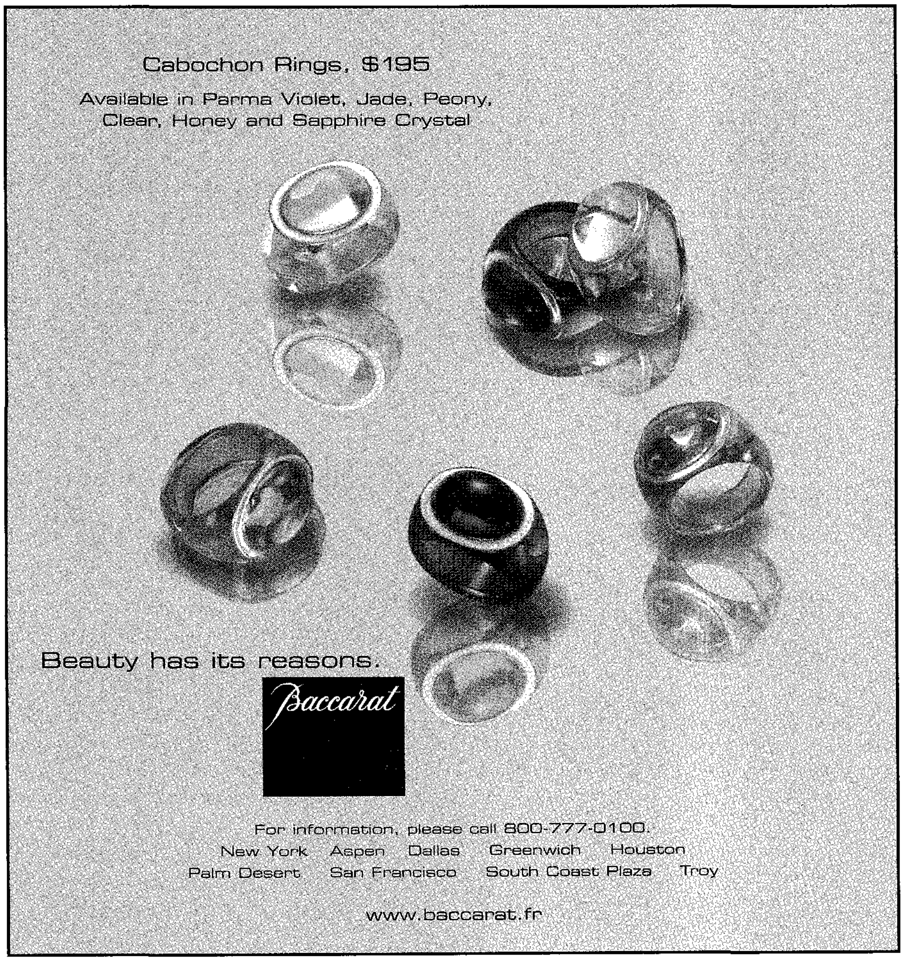

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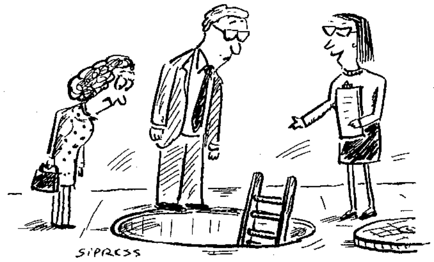
BOOK CURRENTS

Going Underground

At the end of Linda Oatman High and Robert Rayevsky's **UNDER NEW YORK** (Holiday House), an inventive children's book dedicated to such Big Apple subterranea as gas pipes, subways, jazz clubs, and wayward alligators, there appears a haunting coda: "New Yorkers hardly ever think about what is happening beneath their feet—unless something goes wrong." The aftermath of September 11th has prompted New Yorkers to reëxamine their city from top to bottom; several recent books help with the lower levels.



"Come on in. It's an open house."

In **UNEARTHING GOTHAM** (Yale), anthropology professors Anne-Marie Cantwell and Diana diZerega Wall point out that while millions go about their lives on New York's surface, an eleven-thousand-year-old human history slumbers below. Cantwell and diZerega draw our attention to such improbable treasures as Staten Island Clovis points and, of more recent vintage, a citywide embarrassment of ceramic chamber pots. A 1991 dig led to renewed interest in the forgotten Five Points area of Lower Manhattan, once the city's most infamous neighborhood. **FIVE POINTS** (Free Press), by the historian Tyler Anbinder, tells of this dismal, teeming Victorian slum, where tap dancing emerged and celebrities like Charles Dickens came to gawk.

The crime, disease, and overpopulation of Five Points were a major impetus for the construction of New York's subway system, which is examined rivet by rivet, proposal by proposal, in Peter Derrick's **TUNNELING TO THE FUTURE** (New York University). As an archivist and historian, Derrick conducted his own exhaustive excavations to uncover the story of how the subway once saved New York from peril.

—*Mark Rozzo*

CHADS

The most controversial passing of the torch in American history, the often surreal events surrounding the 2000 presidential election riveted and divided the nation. Jeffrey Toobin distills the complex Bush-Gore post-election drama of pregnant chads, Sunshine State politics, and Supreme Court nuance into a lucid and definitive narrative of 36 historic days.

TOO CLOSE TO CALL:
THE THIRTY-SIX DAY BATTLE TO DECIDE THE 2000 ELECTION
by Jeffrey Toobin
Pub. Price: $25.95
Our Price: $20.76
Readers' Advantage Price: $18.68

CHECKS

Arguably one of the most powerful men in America, Alan Greenspan is credited as the chief architect of the recent economic boom. Yet little is known about the enigmatic Greenspan or the inner workings of the Federal Reserve. Bob Woodward delves deeply into this mysterious organization to reveal exactly how Greenspan and the Fed operate.

MAESTRO: GREENSPAN'S FED AND THE AMERICAN BOOM
by Bob Woodward
Pub. Price: $14.00
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CHAMBERS

Richard Nixon's last appointee to the Supreme Court, William Rehnquist, has played a pivotal role in moving the Court to the right. John Dean, who led the charge for this appointment, now reveals the improbable series of events that thrust Rehnquist onto the court. Dean's unprecedented look behind the scenes chronicles how a court candidate ultimately wins presidential backing.

THE REHNQUIST CHOICE
by John W. Dean
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MOVIES OPENING

EVERYTHING PUT TOGETHER
The story of a suburban couple (Rahda Mitchell and Justin Louis) coping with the death of their baby. Marc Forster directed. Opening Nov. 9. (Cinema Village.)

HEIST
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Nov. 9.

I REMEMBER ME
Kim Snyder directed this documentary about chronic fatigue syndrome. Opening Nov. 9. (The Screening Room.)

KING OF THE JUNGLE
John Leguizamo plays a disabled man searching for his mother's killers in this drama set in New York City. Opening Nov. 9.

OTOMO
A drama based on the true story of an African refugee (Isaach de Bankolé) whose confrontation with two policemen on the Stuttgart subway left all three men dead. Frieder Schlaich directed. In German. Opening Nov. 7. (Film Forum.)

SHALLOW HAL
The Farrelly brothers wrote and directed this comedy about a man (Jack Black) who can see only the "inner beauty" of women. With Gwyneth Paltrow. Opening Nov. 9.

FILM NOTES

AMÉLIE
A waifish, bobbed Parisienne discovers her mission in life: to bring unexpected happiness to others, and so to herself. Such is the story of Amélie (Audrey Tautou), and the simplicity of it—not to mention its dangerous surfeit of sweetness—appears to have touched a universal nerve. (In truth, the saga of the movie's success is more telling than anything in the movie itself.) Tautou is clearly a find, although one wonders what Mathieu Kassovitz, who plays the object of her affection, made of his role; it was Kassovitz who, in 1995, yanked French cinema up to date with his baring of ethnic hostilities in "La Haine." The Paris of this new movie lies at the other extreme, although what nags at you most is not the neighborly charm but the itchy, unsettled manner of the director, Jean-Pierre Jeunet. How far should we trust a plea for benevolence when it feels like a box of tricks? In French.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 11/5/01.) (Angelika Film Center and Paris.)

BEING THERE
Hal Ashby's confidently made yet conceptually confused 1979 comedy about a gardener's ascent to fame gained a collegiate following and wielded surprising influence as a tony sort of underdog fable. Peter Sellers plays a certifiable moron who has derived all his knowledge of the world from television. When he's forced by his lifelong employer's death to go beyond the garden walls, we root for him to make it because he is so sweet and innocent. The mysteriously suave Sellers gives what Jerzy Kosinski (who adapted his own novel) called "a medically correct portrayal of what children are getting to be like—restrictive, non-verbal, passive." Kosinski intended him to be a cautionary product of TV culture, but audiences took his antihero as a cult leader. The movie originally ended with Sellers walking on water, followed by a blurred TV screen and a Gatorade commercial. To avoid audiences' hailing him as a Christ figure, Ashby later inserted outtakes of Sellers' cracking up out of character, as if to say, "See, he's only an actor."—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum; Nov. 9-11.)

DINNER RUSH
A modestly scaled independent film about a long, long evening of cooking, eating, intrigue, hustle, sex, and murder at a Tribeca trattoria. The movie, well directed by Bob Giraldi, is made up of many little vignettes, most of them incisively written by the team of Rick Shaughnessy and Brian Kalata. Danny Aiello plays the tough-old-pro owner who may give up the place to his son (Edoardo Ballerini), a brilliant chef who has turned the family restaurant into something very chic. With Kirk Acevedo as a compulsive gambler who works as a sous-chef, Sandra Bernhard as a food writer in a wig, and many others. The movie was shot at Gigino, an actual restaurant that Giraldi owns.—*David Denby* (10/1/01) (Murray Hill Cinemas and Village East Cinemas.)

THE ENDURANCE
A documentary about Sir Ernest Shackleton's 1914 Antarctic expedition—a triumph of human will, or, more literally, the ultimate example of sang-froid. Caroline Alexander wrote the concise narration, and the director, George Butler, takes care to etch the awesome physical realities at the bottom of the world. His camera hovers inches above the frigid dark-blue waters and pans across a merciless horizon of frozen sea. Frank Hurley, the expedition's original documentarian, performed a small miracle by saving his photo negatives and film reels. The scenes he shot of the men exercising the Canadian sled dogs and working furiously to extract their trapped ship are the gem within the film's careful casing.—*Michael Agger* (Empire 25, 59th Street East Cinema, and Village East Cinemas.)

FROM HELL
Allen and Albert Hughes trade in the mean streets of Los Angeles for those of London circa 1888. Their Jack the Ripper movie has its source in a graphic novel by Alan Moore, who delved into the architecture of Nicholas Hawksmoor, the rites of Freemasonry in Victorian England, and other subtexts in order to invent a plausible fiction of who the Ripper may have been. The Hughes brothers take this careful work and tart it up, making it over into a gruesome, blood-soaked spectacle. Johnny Depp, peering through his forelock, is Inspector Fred Abberline, a policeman who finds his suspects in opium dreams. This makes for nice visual montages—including some unforgettable pulsating red grapes—but little in the way of suspense. With Heather Graham, theoretically playing the Irish prostitute Mary Kelly.—*M.A.* (Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, and Village East Cinemas.)

INTIMACY
Jay (Mark Rylance) and Claire (Kerry Fox) meet for sex every Wednesday in Jay's unfurnished London flat. Photographed in a ghostly light, the two grapple silently; their lovemaking is more about hunger and release than pleasure. The director Patrice Chéreau, adapting stories by Hanif Kureishi, seems to be attempting a generational portrait of Londoners in their thirties who are not quite gifted or single-minded enough to fulfill their dreams—failed musicians, painters, and actors who have drifted into wretchedness and bickering. The movie has some fine moods of bafflement and rage, but much of it is garbled and rather vague. The camera, right on top of the actors, seems to be chasing something that it can't find. With Timothy Spall as Claire's faithful husband, by far the most fully created character in the movie.—*D.D.* (10/29/01) (Angelika Film Center and Murray Hill Cinemas.)

IRON MONKEY
This satisfying kung-fu flick from the action choreographer Yuen Woo Ping dates from 1993, before his work on "The Matrix," and the fights are less stylized, with more direct hand-to-hand combat and gymnastics. Dr. Yang (Yu Ruan-Guang), a mild-mannered herbalist, moonlights as the title character, a Robin Hood of rural China. It's amusing, during the slow humor scenes, to add up the various arts, besides martial, in which he excels. They include calligraphy, acupuncture, meditation, and cooking: when Dr. Yang slices noodles, he shoots them into a bowl from six feet away. In Cantonese.—*M.A.* (Astor Plaza, East 86th Street Cinema, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Sutton 1 and 2, and Village Theatre VII.)

K-PAX
As a creature named Prot who may have dropped in from another planet, Kevin Spacey has a good moment with a dog, kneeling down with the frisky beast and interpreting its barks as speech. But that's about it. What should have been spooky fun is mainly soft-brained and painstakingly earnest. Jeff Bridges, looking about thirty pounds heavier than usual, plays a workaholic psychiatrist who cannot figure out whether Prot is truly an alien or just a head case. Meanwhile, Prot liberates all the bedraggled psychotics who live in the mental ward with him. The director, Iain Softley, uses the lunatics as a kind of comic chorus—an offensive idea masquerading as daring humanism.—*D.D.* (Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

THE LANDLORD
Hal Ashby's 1970 début film as a director is one of his best. Based on the novel by Kristin Hunter, a black woman, and adapted by another black writer, William Gunn, it's about an affable, rich blond bachelor (Beau Bridges) who gets in over his head when he buys a house in a black ghetto, intending to throw out the tenants and turn it into his own handsome townhouse. The tenants include Pearl Bailey, and Diana Sands in probably her finest screen performance—when she becomes sexually and emotionally involved with the new landlord, he starts learning something about passion and terror.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; Nov. 12-13.)

THE LAST CASTLE
A demagogic melodrama with James Gandolfini as the warden of a military prison who wears glasses and habitually listens to Mozart (obviously a very bad guy). He tries to squelch an insurrection led by one of his prisoners (Robert Redford), a former three-star general with enough charisma to rouse a yardful of thugs without even lifting his voice. Too bad Redford conveys little authority in the role; military men aren't really within his range (he seems to be playing an international aid worker). The director, Rod Lurie, demonstrates a slick proficiency at manipulating easy emotions, and the American flag that he gloriously unfurls at the end should raise a lump in the national throat.—*D.D.* (10/29/01) (East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, 19th Street East 6, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.)

LIFE AS A HOUSE
Kevin Kline gives a persuasive and ornery performance as a middle-aged failure who devotes himself to building a dream house on the golden cliffs of California. He plays an architect who doesn't think much of himself but is determined to follow his own path, and Kline's face is lit by anger in ways that we've never seen from him in movies. Much of the picture, until the tear-dripping conclusion, is charming. As the house goes up, various people drop in to saw a few boards, flirt, or make mischief. Kristin Scott Thomas, relaxing onscreen for the first time, plays George's rueful ex-wife. Hayden Christensen is his sixteen-year-old son—pierced, eyeshadowed, and drugged. The sunshiny cinematography is by Vilmos Zsigmond. Irwin Winkler directed.—*D.D.* (10/29/01) (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema II, Empire 25, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE LOVERS
In 1958, it became notorious for beating an obscenity charge in the U.S. Supreme Court. Louis Malle's breakthrough movie survives as the most silken-elegant of erotic soap operas, with bored provincial housewife Jeanne Moreau rejecting life with her husband, her daughter, and a conventional

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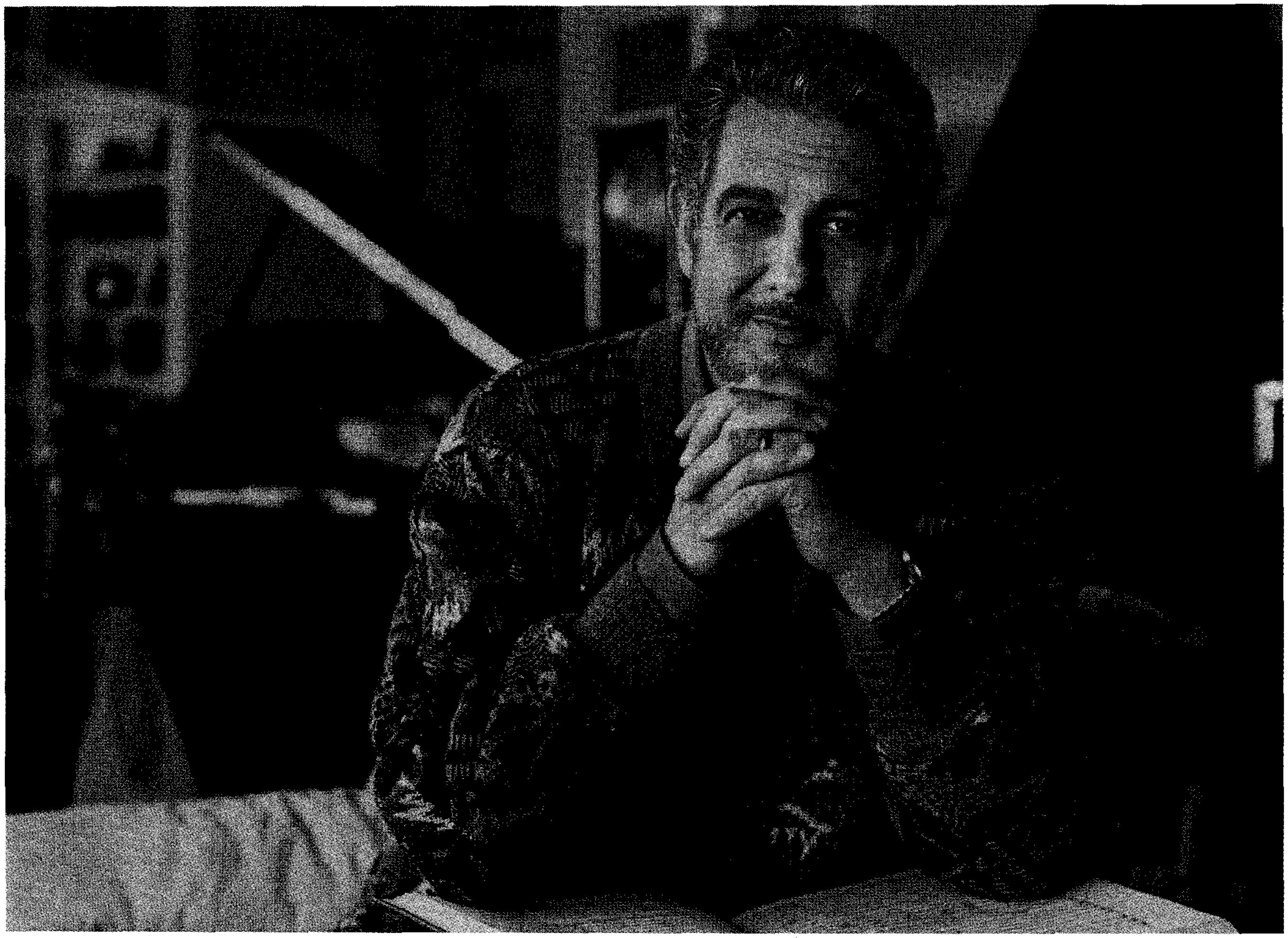

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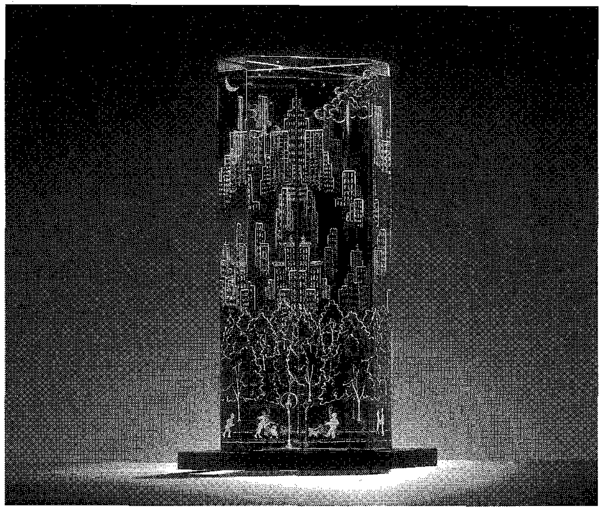

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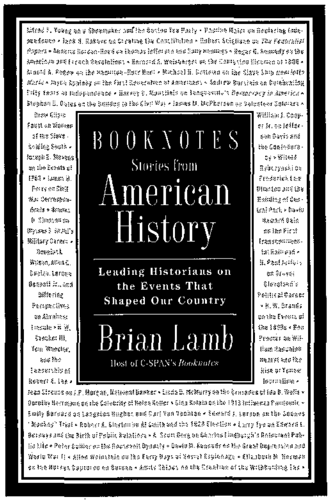

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paramour for a stranger with whom she spends one enchanted evening, night, and dawn. The sound of Brahms on the soundtrack, the whiff of alcohol on the characters' breath, and the sight of Moreau as a vision in off-white floating on the country breezes put the audience into a happy state of amorous inebriation. In French.—*M.S.* (Florence Gould Hall; Nov. 13.)

LUMIÈRE AND COMPANY

The director Sarah Moon organized this 1995 experiment as a tribute to the brothers Lumière. Forty filmmakers of international renown were asked to create short films (fifty-two seconds long) with natural light and without synchronized sound, using the Lumières' hand-cranked wooden cinématographe. The Lumières were famous for the quotidian beauty of their street scenes, but their spiritual rival, the father of film fantasists, Georges Méliès, ends up stealing this movie by way of David Lynch. He delivers a towering and horrific entry featuring a dead boy, a trio of cops, three mysterious beauties, alien beasts in work clothes, a naked woman fighting for life in a water tank, and a man and woman who could be the dead boy's parents. It's like every fifties science-fiction film you've ever seen—plus nudity—compressed into one potent near-minute.—*M.S.* (American Museum of the Moving Image; Nov. 11.)

THE MAN WHO WASN'T THERE

The latest Coen brothers project is shot in smooth, glittering monochrome: a calmly told tale of murder without mayhem. We are on the brink of the nineteen-fifties, with its distinctive fears and badges of honor: Big Dave (James Gandolfini) can still lay claim to a good war record, while his wife, in all honesty, reports a visit from outer space. Billy Bob Thornton plays Ed, a barber living quietly with his wife (Frances McDormand) in northern California. He tries his hand at blackmail, and the plan misfires—justice catches up with him in the end, although, even then, he is the wrong man. Unfortunately, Thornton is so cool in the role that you simply don't believe that he would pass unnoticed. The whole film has the air of a clever, unthrilling conceit—a guided tour of film noir, without the sweat and compulsions of the real thing. With Tony Shalhoub, stealing the picture as a lawyer de luxe.—*A.L.* (11/5/01) (Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

MULHOLLAND DRIVE

A woman wanders away from a car wreck and into a strange house. Little old people scurry under the foot of a door, squeaking like mice. Yes, it's a David Lynch project. This one began life as a TV pilot; you can just imagine the aghast faces of the network executives as they saw what they had commissioned. In the event, the elongated weirdness, stretching to two and a half hours, feels discomfortingly at home on the larger screen; if you ever wanted to see an epic horror soap, this is what it would look like. Many established Lynch motifs are in place, most of them summoned from one corner or another of the nineteen-fifties: the innocent blonde (Naomi Watts), the baffled brunette (Laura Elena Harring), the clueless cop (Robert Forster). Addicts of the director will tie themselves in knots trying to pick the lock of the film; the rest of us can lie back and enjoy the spooking. With Justin Theroux and, as a tough old landlady, Ann Miller. Yes, *that* Ann Miller.—*A.L.* (10/8/01) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THE NIBELUNGEN SAGA

Utterly extraordinary: gigantic heroes, acres of studio-built sets, trailing processions, and a romantic mystique. Fritz Lang's bizarre, monumental German silent film, made in 1923 and 1924, and conceived as a tribute to the nation, is in two full-length parts—"Siegfried" and "Kriemhild's Revenge." The first tends to be static and ornamental; the second is packed with contrapuntal visual rhythms. It makes a picture like "Caligari" seem as routine as a TV sitcom. The influence of the painter Arnold Böcklin is evident; this film, in turn, was a strong influence on Eisenstein and Leni Riefenstahl.—*P.K.* (BAM Rose Cinemas; Nov. 8-9.)

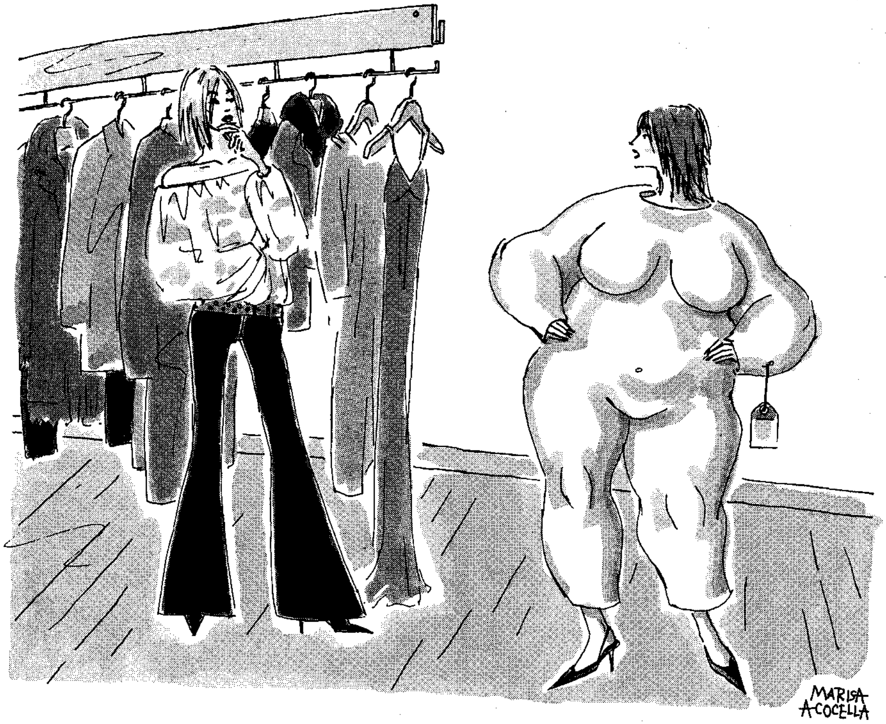
RIDING IN CARS WITH BOYS
Beverly Donofrio's uncompromising memoir gets a semifictional makeover in the hands of the director Penny Marshall. The movie centers around Donofrio's ill-timed pregnancy at fifteen and how she copes with the frustrations of teen motherhood in her own not so pretty way. Drew Barrymore is never less than believable as she ages twenty years—raising a child, marrying the sweetly clueless father of her baby (Steve Zahn), and yearning for a better life. But it's the haunting performance by Zahn that gives the picture a surprisingly complex resonance.—*Bruce Diones* (Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Union Square.)

SERENDIPITY
Two consenting New York adults meet at Bloomingdale's during the Christmas season. He (John Cusack) takes Her (Kate Beckinsale) to Wollman Rink and proceeds to draw on her forearm with a pen, connecting her freckles to form the constellation Cassiopeia. She, wisely, proposes that they let fate decide whether or not they should be together. Cusack does his familiar woe-is-me loverboy shtick, and Beckinsale is full of charm and crispy vowels, but the real sparks are in the supporting performances, especially that of John Corbett as a musician boyfriend who's an unholy union of Kenny G and Yanni.—*M.A.* (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema II, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

TAPE
Richard Linklater, the same guy who directed the current feature "Waking Life," turns out a nifty adaptation of a single-set play by Stephen Beller (who also wrote the screenplay). It all takes place, in real time, in a dreary East Lansing motor hotel. An unusually animated Ethan Hawke plays a smart young drug dealer reuniting with an old high-school buddy (Robert Sean Leonard) who has become a film director. Leonard's character is the kind of pompous success who wants people to think well of him but may actually be a bit of a louse underneath; back in high school, he took the drug dealer's girlfriend away and may or may not have date-raped her. As the two men grapple, the girlfriend (Uma Thurman)—now an assistant district attorney—shows up in the hotel room. You can see the theatrical manipulations coming, but you are held by the knife thrusts of aggression and the reversals at the end.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center and Empire 25.)

TRAINING DAY
A synthetically plotted melodrama, but still it has power and depth. Denzel Washington is Alonzo Harris, a decorated Los Angeles narcotics cop who breaks in his new partner, Jake Hoyt (Ethan Hawke), a talented rookie from the Valley. Alonzo bullies and taunts the young man, teaching him the brutal wisdom of the street; Jake, who is highly moral, eager to impress, and ambitious, is hurt and baffled. It takes us a while to realize that what seem like random incidents on the street are really the outer edges of a malaise—the dishonesty of Alonzo and the other members of his undercover unit. Despite some trashy and conventionally violent scenes, the movie is psychologically interesting: the dominating and witty Alonzo wants the respect of the young man he's trying to corrupt. Washington is tormented and brilliant; it's his best performance so far.—*D.D.* (10/15/01) (Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Union Square.)

WAKING LIFE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (BAM Rose Cinemas, Empire 25, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)



"Does this make me look thin?" ("Shallow Hal" opens November 9.)

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Edward Koren
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Ken Auletta
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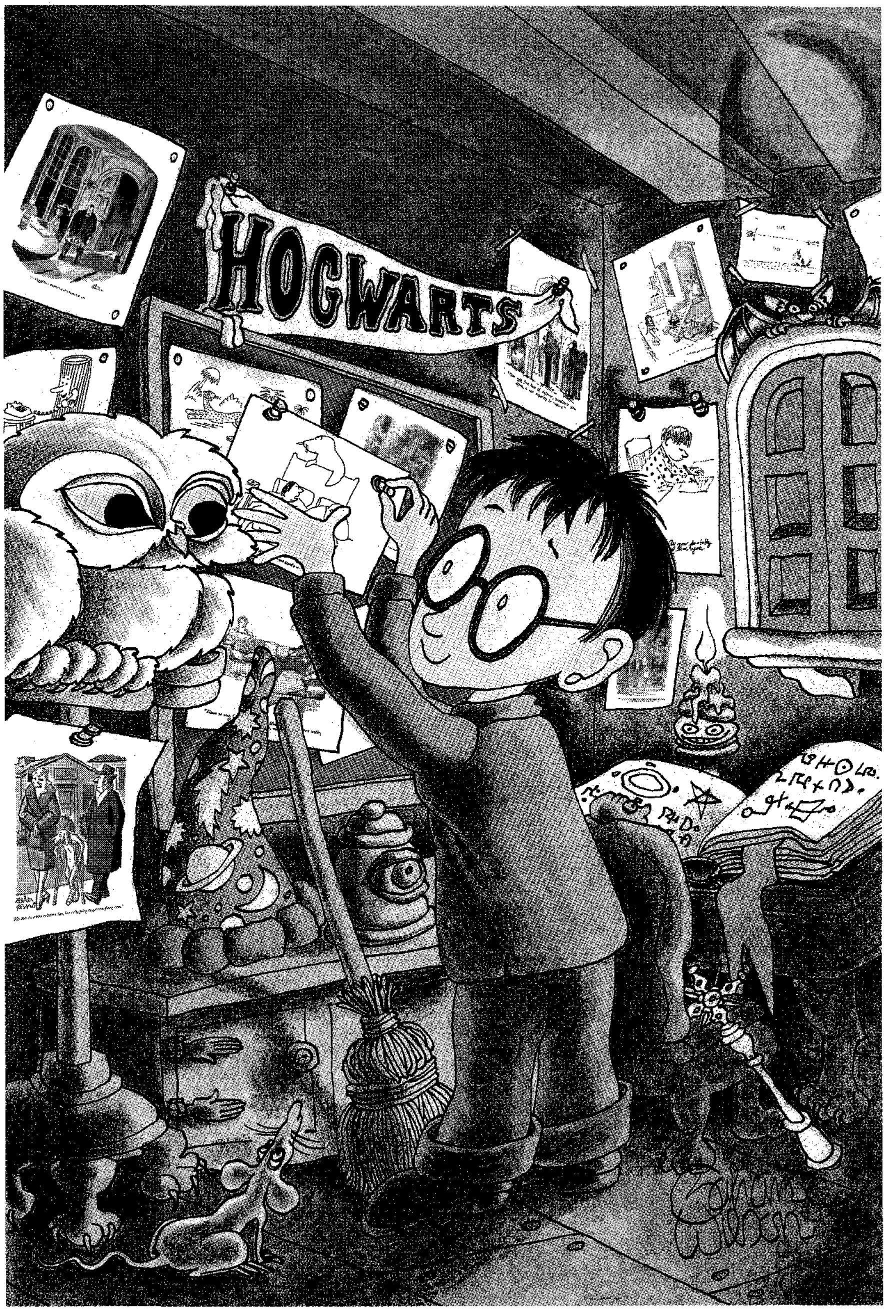
and more
AND: A calendar of *New Yorker* events across the country



Arriving soon on a broomstick: "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone."

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Twin, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Pioneer, 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600).
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Nov. 18: "Shadow Play: Avant-Garde Views of Early Cinema." Nov. 10 at 2: Ken Jacobs uses his two-projector "Nervous System" to enhance a 1903 Edison short. ♦ Nov. 10 at 4:30: More "Nervous System" from Jacobs, enhancing two early train films. ♦ Nov. 11 at 2: "A Trick of the Light" (1996, Wim Wenders; in German). ♦ Nov. 11 at 4: "Lumière and Company" (†). ♦ Repertory nights. Nov. 10-11 at 6:30: "The Third Man" (1949, Carol Reed).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—Nov. 8 at 7:30: "The Nibelungen Part 1: Siegfried" (†). ♦ Nov. 9 at 7:30: "The Nibelungen Part 2: Kriemhild's Revenge" (†). ♦ Nov. 10 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "The Legend of Drunken Master" (1994, Liu Chia-liang; in Cantonese). ♦ Nov. 11 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "The New Legend of Shaolin" (1994, Jing Wong and Corey Yuen; in Cantonese). ♦ Nov. 12 at 6:50 and 9:10: work by "amateur auteurs" like Joseph Cornell and Archie Stewart, screening as part of the American prewar avant-garde cinema series. ♦ Nov. 13 at 7:30: "Harikari" (1919, Fritz Lang).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through Nov. 15: A Hal Ashby retrospective. Nov. 7-8 at 1:20, 3:30, 5:40, 7:50, and 10: "Shampoo" (1975). ♦ Nov. 9-11 at 1:30, 5:45, and 10: "Harold and Maude" (1972). ♦ Nov. 9-11 at 3:25 and 7:40: "Being There" (†). ♦ Nov. 12-13 at 2:15 and 7: "Bound for Glory" (1976). ♦ Nov. 12-13 at 4:15 and 9:40: "The Landlord" (†).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—A tribute to Jeanne Moreau. Nov. 13 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "The Lovers" (†).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Through Nov. 15: New films from Germany. Nov. 8 at 2: "Frost" (1998, Fred Kelemen). ♦ Nov. 8 at 6: "Dear Fidel—Marita's Story" (2000, Wilfried Huismann). ♦ Nov. 9 at 2:30 and Nov. 11 at 2: "Planet Alex" (2000, Uli M. Schüppel). ♦ Nov. 9 at 6: "To Moscow with IKEA" (2001, Michael Chauvistré). ♦ Nov. 9 at 8: "The Loneliness of the Crocodiles" (2000, Jobst Oetzmann). ♦ Nov. 10 at 12:30: "Ecce Homo" (2001, Mirjam Kubescha). ♦ Nov. 10 at 2 and Nov. 12 at 6: "Berlin Is in Germany" (2000, Hannes Stöhr). ♦ Nov. 10 at 5: "Heidi M." (2001, Michael Klier). ♦ Nov. 11 at 12: "Berlin Babylon" (2001, Hubertus Siegert). ♦ Nov. 11 at 4 and Nov. 12 at 2:30: "The Himmler Project" (2000, Romuald Karmakar). ♦ Nov. 13 at 2:30: "Black Box Germany" (2001, Andres Veiel). ♦ Nov. 13 at 6: "Escape to Life—The Erika and Klaus Mann Story" (2000, Andrea Weiss and Wieland Speck).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through Nov. 15: A tribute to *Cahiers du Cinéma*. Nov. 7 at 1, 5, and 9: "Assault on Precinct 13" (1976, John Carpenter). ♦ Nov. 7 at 3 and 7 and Nov. 8 at 1: "Videodrome" (1983, David Cronenberg). ♦ Nov. 8 at 3 and Nov. 9 at 2 and 6:45: "Veronika Voss" (1982, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; in German). ♦ Nov. 9 at 4:15 and 9 and Nov. 11 at 1: "The American Friend" (1983, Wim Wenders; in German). ♦ Nov. 10 at 2: "Jacques Rivette, Le Veilleur" (1990, Claire Denis; in French). ♦ Nov. 10 at 4:30: "Le Cinéma des Cahiers" (2001, Edgardo Cozarinsky). ♦ Nov. 10 at 6:30: "The Mother and the Whore" (1973, Jean Eustache; in French). ♦ Nov. 11 at 3:30 and Nov. 13 at 4: "Hôtel des Amériques" (1980, André Téchiné; in French). ♦ Nov. 11 at 5:30: "Irma Vep" (1996, Olivier Assayas; in French). ♦ Nov. 11 at 7:30 and Nov. 13 at 1: "Esther Kahn" (2000, Arnaud Desplechin).

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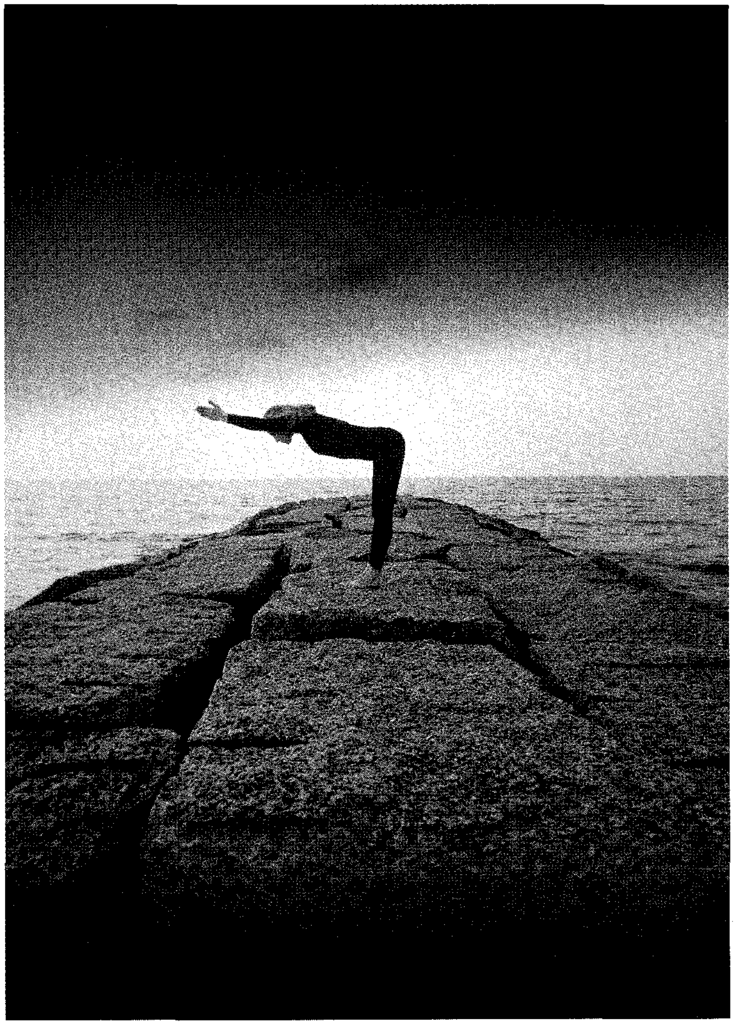

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT

STIMULATION

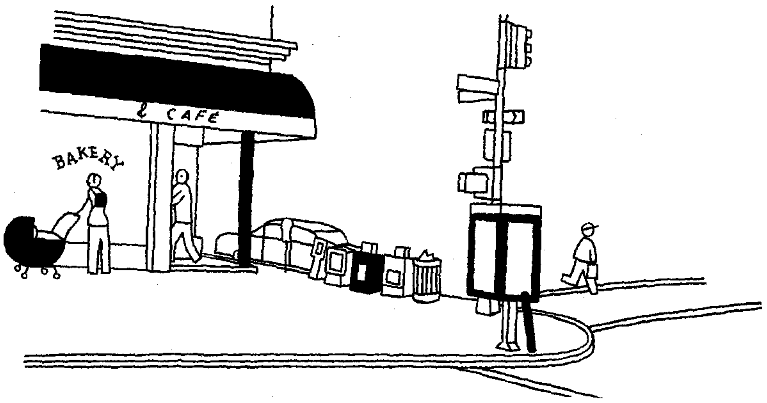
As the country entered its eighth week since terror became a defining condition of American life, President Bush pronounced himself "optimistic," and then he explained why. "I'm optimistic because the spirit of this country is incredibly strong," he said last Wednesday, in a talk to the National Association of Manufacturers. "This is a fabulous nation. The evil ones thought they could affect the spirit of America, but it's had an opposite effect. Our country is patient; our country is resolved; our country is united, regardless of our religion, regardless of where we live, regardless of our political party. We're united behind the fact that we must rise to this occasion."

The language was a little homely, but the phenomenon Bush was pointing to is real. All of us have seen it and felt it in a variety of small and large ways: in gentler, politer interactions with friends and strangers; in an outpouring of charitable giving and volunteer activity; in tableaux of fellowship among political and civic leaders. Our newfound solidarity is, in the first instance, mostly a product of the atrocity that engendered it—the "opposite effect" that Bush mentioned. But if the challenge of terror is to be met, then solidarity had better persist; and if solidarity is to persist, especially as the initial surge of adrenaline and anger gives way to a continuing emergency against a background of chronic anxiety, it had better be tended. This is something one might have imagined that our leaders, all of them, would understand.

LAURENT CILLUFFO

Apparently not. An economic downturn that had already begun before September 11th has been hastened and greatly worsened in the aftermath of that day's events. The economy is now contracting for the first time in nearly a decade, and people are losing their jobs by the hundreds of thousands. All agree on the need for a quick and substantial injection of money. But the "stimulus package" that has emerged from the House of Representatives is truly shocking. The bill, which was passed on October 24th by a vote of 216 to 214 (seven Republicans dared to vote "no"), consists overwhelmingly of handouts to the prosperous and the influential. It would earmark more than $140 billion in tax cuts for wealthy individuals and corporations. Its most grotesque feature would not only abolish the "alternative minimum tax" on corporate income—thereby bringing back the days when profitable corporations could lawyer their way out of paying taxes altogether—but also give back money collected during the fifteen years the tax has been on the books. The Treasury would simply cut checks—$1.4 billion for IBM, a billion for Ford, $833 million for General Motors, and so on. The total for this provision alone, $25 billion, is nearly double what the bill contains in relief for taxpayers of modest means. And while all the cuts for the rich are permanent or quasi-permanent, those for the non-rich are (as any tax cut aimed at stimulating immediate demand ought to be) a one-shot deal.

The package outlined by the Administration at least spreads the minimum tax giveback over ten years, but in some respects it is even more dispiriting. The House would cut only the lowest of the four upper-income personal tax rates; the White House wants to cut them all.



More than half the benefits would go to the richest one per cent, whose average take next year alone would be around thirty thousand dollars. The bottom three-quarters—including all those cops and firemen—would get nothing.

Those who are setting forth proposals of this kind consider themselves patriots, and no doubt they are on most days of the week. But what they have come up with here is so hostile to any notion of solidarity—or of shared burdens or sacrifice—that it is difficult to credit them, in this matter at least, with any motivation beyond greed, a desire to reward their biggest campaign contributors, and a reflexive ideological hatred of anything that looks like progressive taxation. The debate, such as it is, has been mainly between right-wing Republicans and far-right-wing Republicans, with a bit of kibbitzing from mostly centrist Democrats. What the latter are proposing is better, morally and economically, because help would go to people who need the money and would be more likely to spend it than save it. But what's noticeably missing from the discussion is some larger alternative vision.

When demand wavers and there is plenty of unused capacity, as is the case now, the obvious remedy is spending. And the best way to guarantee that money will be spent is to spend it. The great advantage of government spending over private spending is not only that it is surer but also that it directly addresses public needs beyond the strictly economic. Exhortations to people to show their patriotism by splurging at the mall or taking Florida vacations may in theory make a certain narrow economic sense, but they are not likely to be followed. Americans understand that this is no time for self-indulgence. The list of public needs, all of which relate to the present crisis, is long, ranging from transportation security and public health to education, infrastructure improvements, and reducing dependence on foreign oil. Stimulating the economy by seriously tackling these needs would gird the country's loins and fit its sombre and selfless mood. The events of the past two months have reminded us of the value of the much neglected public side of our common life. Strengthening that side would nourish the solidarity that was September 11th's only gift.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

THRILL IS GONE DEPT. A CURIOUS FLIGHT PATH

Since 1994, visitors to the Empire State Building have had access to two views of Manhattan: one from the observation deck, the other courtesy of NY Skyride, which is situated on the second floor. The Skyride is an eight-minute virtual-reality movie that creates the sensation of being in a spaceship flying above and among the city's skyscrapers. The ride incorporates flight-simulation technology that is used to train the pilots of Boeing 747s—the theatre is equipped with forty seats, which pitch and shudder like an airplane in violent motion—and much of the footage was shot from a helicopter buzzing over Manhattan. A brochure promises that the audience will "experience New York's most famous sights from views only daredevils can imagine."

TOM BACHTELL

Unfortunately, since September 11th those views have become more easily imaginable. Indeed, rather than providing, as the brochure suggests, "a fast-flying feast for the senses," the Skyride may well be the best way to experience what it was like to be aboard American Airlines Flight 11, should your nightmares not have provided sufficient material on the subject. In the opening sequence, one has the illusion of free-falling from the top of the Empire State Building, swooping up past the spire of the Chrysler Building, diving down to the East River, scooting under the Manhattan Bridge, then rising up over the Brooklyn Bridge and heading toward the World Trade Center. Just as the Skyride barrels toward the north tower—heading straight for a floor somewhere in the seventies, by the look of things, then veering to the left at the last second—a voice-over warns of stormy weather ahead, and the aircraft is struck by virtual lightning and goes wildly out of control. "What's our direction?" the panicked Skyride pilot asks. "That would be down," Ground Control replies. There are onscreen alarms and explosions, and shrieks from real-life members of the audience, who have the sensation of tumbling out of the sky, careening into the canyons of lower Manhattan, and, finally, crashing into Wall Street, sending screaming pedestrians running for cover.

Terry Lee Torok, the creative producer of the Skyride, admits that recent events have taken some of the thrills out of his project. "Does it change our consideration that we crash into Wall Street, and that this no longer feels as appropriate and thrilling as it did?" he said last week, speaking by phone from the midtown office of his company, Live From Earth Entertainment. "Certainly. But do you really want to edit out the Twin Towers? I think that is when terrorism wins." The Skyride, which took almost two years to make and cost seven and a half million dollars, closed down on September 11th, along with the rest of the Empire State Building. It reopened briefly on September 15th and was back in business part time by the end of the month. Two weeks ago, the regular schedule, 10 A.M. to 10 P.M., resumed. Torok said that the decision to keep the Skyride running was his way of signalling that New York is stronger than ever. "If we close down, then who closed us down?" he said. "Did we close us down, or did terrorism close us down? We are not going to let terrorism close us down."

The ride is unaltered, although signs posted at the ticket booth caution that the film features the Twin Towers. "The Management & Staff of NY Skyride feel very deeply the loss and pain brought upon our City by the tragic events of September 11," the signs read. "We felt that aside from allowing the film to serve as a form of historical artifact of 'the City

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as it once was' the NY Skyride film will be a symbol of remembrance in our honor of the memory of those lost in this dark chapter in our City's history."

In spite of those sentiments, the film will eventually be edited, according to Michael Leeb, the chief operating officer of Skyline Multimedia Entertainment, the management company that operates the ride. The north tower near-miss and the crash into Wall Street will probably be deleted, he said; but the sequence at the end of the film, when the Skyride sweeps around the Statue of Liberty at night, then approaches the twinkling towers from the south, swerving at the last minute above the World Financial Center, will probably be retained. "We have conducted several customer surveys since September 11th, and, believe it or not, the overwhelming majority of people felt we shouldn't cut the World Trade Center out," Leeb said. "But we felt that maybe there should be some changes made in keeping with good taste."

Good taste, however, has not persuaded Leeb to shut the ride down while the reëditing is being done. "I have to keep running my business," he said. "Though we realize that current events are painful, to change and edit a film takes considerable time. My facility would be closed for six to eight months." As it is, Leeb said that business has been down. Normally, he would have sold forty-two thousand tickets in October, but last month only twenty-five thousand visitors came to the Skyride. (Tickets cost an average of eight dollars per person.) Fortunately, there has been an uptick in sales at the Skyride gift shop, where World Trade Center-related items have been selling particularly well. The shop also features a photography facility, in which customers can, through imaging technology, pose, Godzilla-like, next to any of a number of New York landmark buildings, including the Twin Towers. Those prints, at fifteen dollars each, are moving briskly.

Leeb said that his company has not made any donations to charities in the wake of the disaster, but he has been offering heavily discounted Skyride tickets to tour groups from out of state. He also mentioned that he is offering free tickets to members of the New York Police and Fire Departments and their families. So far, very few have taken him up on it.

—*Rebecca Mead*

HELP WANTED INTERNSHIP, ANYONE?

Esther Shin is a twenty-four-year-old Columbia University graduate from Port Jefferson, Long Island. Until recently, she worked as a research assistant to a neurologist at Mount Sinai Hospital. "I wrote my letter of resignation yesterday," she said proudly last week. She was enjoying the early hours of her new career—that of spiting her parents, who apparently want her to be a doctor ("I'm Asian," Esther says, by way of explanation). And so she has considered, abstractedly, making a living as a forensic pathologist, or a large-animal veterinarian ("I could marry a ranch farmer and take care of cows and write cowboy poetry"), or an organist ("I'd like to try my hand at music").

Or else politics. Not long ago, Esther's friend Vivian, a student at Columbia, who knew of Esther's parent-spiting ambitions, came across an E-mail notice from the political-science department at Columbia. Vivian forwarded it to Esther:

> Bill Clinton's office, located at 55 West 125th Street, is seeking interns in its understaffed scheduling department. Intern will answer phones, take requests, and follow through on such requests. Also will be responsible for light computer work and keeping track of calendar. Flexible days/hours. For consideration, please fax resume to: David Slade, Deputy Director of Scheduling.

"Vivian knows how much I like President Clinton," Esther explained. "I find him amusing. His antics—and the fact that everyone got so worked up over them." She began to think about applying for a stint in the Harlem office.

The E-mail also reached Lindsey Lincoln, a twenty-five-year-old senior in the political-science department at Columbia. She faxed over her résumé. A few days later, an assistant to David Slade called her in for an interview. She wore a suit, flats, and a gold-and-silver necklace, and felt, as people often do at job interviews, a little overdressed.

"Security was very tight," Lindsey said. "People were dressed professionally, but it was relaxed and comfortable." She was there for about fifteen minutes, during which she interviewed with Slade's assistant and met three staffers. Clinton was out of town, although there were photographs of him everywhere.

"He was generally referred to as 'he,'" Lindsey said. "I was told I would be in contact with him. In general, if he needed assistance and his assistant was busy I would be asked to do anything basic. The guy said Mr. Clinton might need help in his kitchen, and I would do that. Filing, copying, helping to set up cameras if he was doing an interview. Mainly fielding phone calls in the scheduling office. He also said that sometimes people will call with ridiculous requests to see Mr. Clinton or invite him to something. Then someone serious will call. You need to know the difference, yet respond equally."

A few days later, Lindsey was offered the job—no pay, about fifteen hours a week. She weighed the pros and cons. On the one hand, it was a great résumé-builder and a wonderful opportunity for someone who had, as she did, foreign-policy aspirations. On the other hand, her schedule was busy: she had a job already, at a nonprofit group devoted to sending medical supplies to Cuba, and she was applying to graduate school. What's more, the Clinton internship was, as she put it, "a little basic," her résumé being deeper, in her estimation, than most of the others must have been. Before enrolling at Columbia, she had managed a restaurant in Lenox, Massachusetts, and pursued a career as a glassblower.

After some deliberation, Lindsey decided to turn the job down. "I just didn't have the time," she said.

Esther, in the end, did not even apply for the internship. She said that in the days after she learned about it her opinion of Clinton had undergone a change. She had been listening to Howard Stern on the radio, and heard Stern deride Clinton for ignoring him backstage at a recent benefit concert at Madison Square Garden for the victims of the World Trade Center attack. Stern was attired in a variation on his Fartman suit. "Bill blew him off," Esther said. Now she was thinking of applying for an internship on the Howard Stern show instead.

The job in Bill Clinton's Harlem office is still open.

—*Nick Paumgarten*

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ANNALS OF NATIONAL SECURITY

ESCAPE AND EVASION

What happened when the Special Forces landed in Afghanistan?

BY SEYMOUR M. HERSH

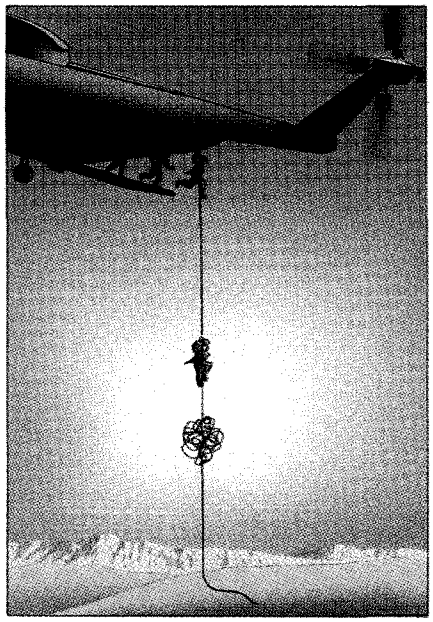
Early on the morning of Saturday, October 20th, more than a hundred Army Rangers parachuted into a Taliban-held airbase sixty miles southwest of Kandahar, in southern Afghanistan. A military cameraman videotaped the action with the aid of a night-vision lens, and his grainy, green-tinted footage of determined commandos and billowing parachutes dominated the television news that night. The same morning, a second Special Operations unit, made up largely of Rangers and a reinforced Delta Force squadron, struck at a complex outside Kandahar which included a house used by Mullah Omar, the Taliban leader.

In a Pentagon briefing later that day, General Richard B. Myers, of the Air Force, the new chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, reported that the Special Operations Forces "were able to deploy, maneuver, and operate inside Afghanistan without significant interference from Taliban forces." He stated that the soldiers did meet resistance at both sites, but overcame it. "I guess you could characterize it as light," he said. "For those experiencing it, of course, it was probably not light." He concluded, "The mission over all was successful. We accomplished our objectives."

Myers also told reporters that the commandos were "refitting and repositioning for potential future operations against terrorist targets" in Afghanistan. But at a second briefing, two days later, he refused to say whether commando operations would continue. "Some things are going to be visible, some invisible," he said.

Myers did not tell the press that, in the wake of a near-disaster during the assault on Mullah Omar's complex, the Pentagon was rethinking future Special Forces operations inside Afghanistan. Delta Force, which prides itself on stealth, had been counterattacked by the Taliban, and some of the Americans had had to fight their way to safety. Twelve Delta members were wounded, three of them seriously.

Delta Force has long complained about a lack of creativity in the Army leadership, but the unexpectedness and the ferocity of the Taliban response "scared the crap out of everyone," a senior military officer told me, and triggered a review of commando tactics and procedures at the United States Central Command, or CENTCOM, at MacDill Air Force Base, in Florida, the headquarters for the war in Afghanistan. "This is no war for Special Operations," one officer said—at least, not as orchestrated by CENTCOM and its commander, General Tommy R. Franks, of the Army, on October 20th.



GUY BILLOUT

There was also disdain among Delta Force soldiers, a number of senior officers told me, for what they saw as the staged nature of the other assault, on the airfield, which had produced such exciting television footage. "It was sexy stuff, and it looked good," one general said. But the operation was something less than the Pentagon suggested. The Rangers' parachute jump took place only after an Army Pathfinder team—a specialized unit that usually works behind enemy lines—had been inserted into the area and had confirmed that the airfield was clear of Taliban forces. "It was a television show," one informed source told me. "The Rangers were not the first in."

Some of the officials I spoke with argued that the parachute operation had value, even without enemy contact, in that it could provide "confidence building" for the young Rangers, many of whom had joined the Army out of high school and had yet to be exposed to combat. "The Rangers come in and the choppers come in and everybody feels good about themselves," a military man who served alongside the Special Forces said. Nonetheless, he asked, "Why would you film it? I'm a big fan of keeping things secret—and this was being driven by public opinion."

Delta Force, which is based at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, has a mystique that no other unit of the Army does. Its mere existence is classified, and, invariably, its activities are described to the public only after the fact. "Black Hawk Down," a book by Mark Bowden about the Special Forces disaster in Mogadishu, Somalia, in 1993, in which eighteen Rangers and Delta Force members were killed, took note of Delta's special status. "They operated strictly in secret," Bowden wrote. "You'd meet this guy hanging out at a bar around Bragg, deeply tanned, biceps rippling, neck wide as a fireplug, with a giant Casio watch and a plug of chaw under his lip, and he'd tell you he worked as a computer programmer for some army contract agency. They called each other by their nicknames and eschewed salutes and all the other traditional trappings of military life. Officers and noncoms in Delta treated each other as equals. Disdain for normal displays of army status was the unit's signature. They simply *transcended* rank." On combat missions, Bowden wrote, Delta Force soldiers disliked working with the younger, far less experienced Rangers.

Referring to the October 20th raid on the Mullah Omar complex, some Delta members told a colleague that it was a "total goat fuck"—military slang meaning that everything that could go wrong did go wrong. According to a report in the London *Observer*, the complex included

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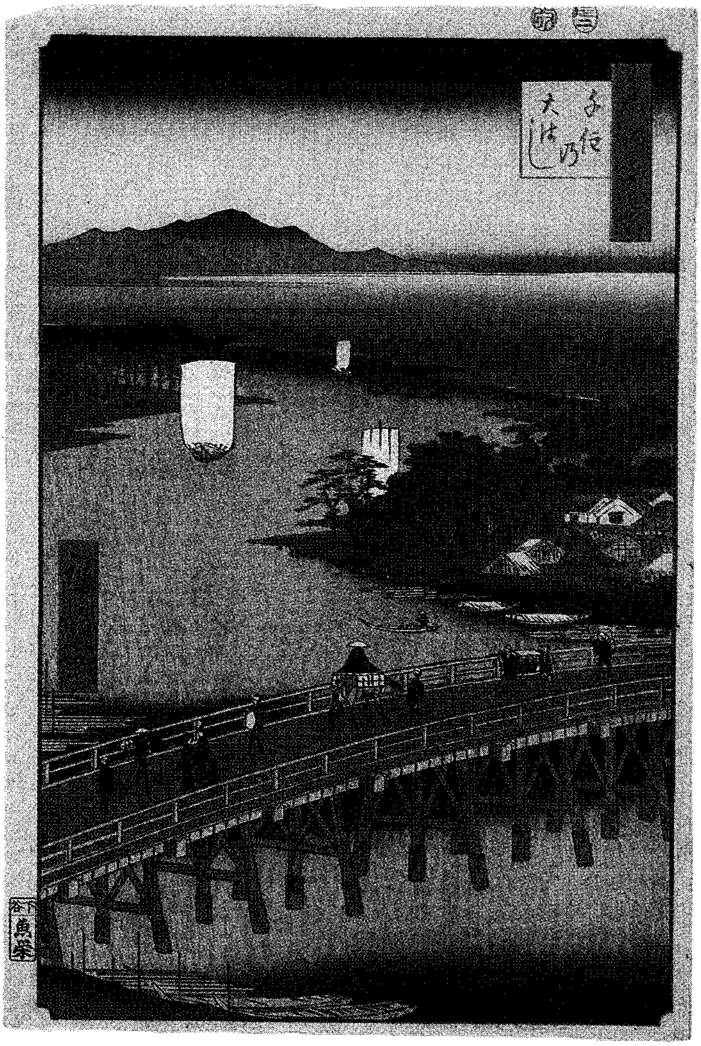

Utagawa Hiroshige, *Senju no Ōhashi* (Great Bridge at Senju). Courtesy Library of Congress.

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little more than potholed roads, the brick house used by Mullah Omar, and a small protective garrison of thatched huts. The Pentagon had intelligence reports indicating that the Mullah sometimes spent the night there; a successful mission could result in his death or capture and might, at a minimum, produce valuable intelligence. Delta had hoped to do what it did best: work a small team of four to six men on the ground into the target area—the phrase for such reconnaissance is "snoop and poop"—and attack with no warning. (One senior intelligence officer said that a member of Delta Force had told him, "We take four guys, and if we lose them, that's what we get paid for.")

CENTCOM's attack plan called, instead, for an enormous assault on the Mullah's complex. The mission was initiated by sixteen AC-130 gunships, which poured thousands of rounds into the surrounding area but deliberately left the Mullah's house unscathed. The idea was that any Taliban intelligence materials would thus be left intact, or that, with a bit of luck, Omar would perhaps think he was safe and spend the night. A reinforced company of Rangers—roughly two hundred soldiers—was flown by helicopter into a nearby area, to serve as a blocking force in case Delta ran into heavy resistance. Chinook helicopters, the Army's largest, then flew to a staging area and disgorged the reinforced Delta squadron—about a hundred soldiers—and their six-by-six assault vehicles, with specially mounted machine guns. The Delta team stormed the complex, and found little of value: no Mullah and no significant documents.

"As they came out of the house, the shit hit the fan," one senior officer recounted. "It was like an ambush. The Taliban were firing light arms and either R.P.G.s"—rocket-propelled grenades—"or mortars." The chaos was terrifying. A high-ranking officer who has had access to debriefing reports told me that the Taliban forces were firing grenades, and that they seemed to have an unlimited supply. Delta Force, he added, found itself in "a tactical firefight, and the Taliban had the advantage." The team immediately began taking casualties, and evacuated. The soldiers broke into separate units—one or more groups of four to six men each and a main force that retreated to the waiting helicopters. According to established procedures, the smaller groups were to stay behind to provide fire cover. Army gunships then arrived on the scene and swept the compound with heavy fire.

The Delta team was forced to abandon one of its objectives—the insertion of an undercover team into the area—and the stay-behind soldiers fled to a previously determined rendezvous point, under a contingency plan known as an E. & E., for escape and evasion. One of the Chinook helicopters smashed its undercarriage while pulling away from the grenades and the crossfire, leaving behind a section of the landing gear. The Taliban later displayed this as a trophy, claiming, falsely, that a helicopter had been shot down. (According to the Pentagon, the helicopter had come "into contact with a barrier.")

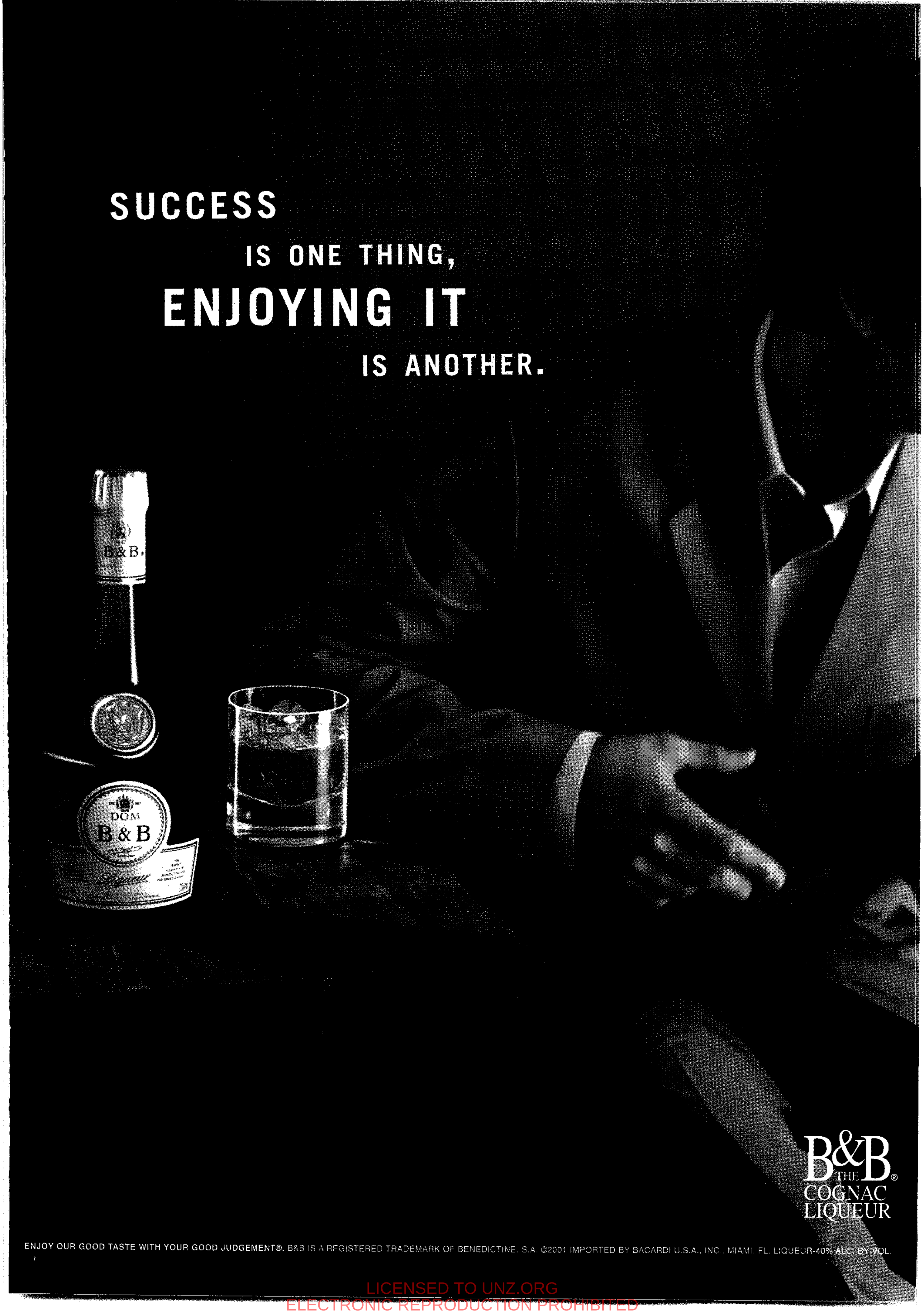
The failed 1993 Special Forces attack in Mogadishu, with its enduring image of a slain American dragged through the city's streets, had created a furor, and led to allegations that the soldiers had been sent in without adequate combat support. The CENTCOM planners were unquestionably eager to avoid the same mistake, and their anxiety was perhaps heightened by the fact that the attacks would be the first of the ground war. But the resulting operation was criticized by many with experience in Special Operations as far too noisy ("It would wake the dead," one officer told me) and far too slow, giving the Taliban time to organize their resistance. One Delta Force soldier told a colleague that the planners "think we can perform fucking magic. We can't. Don't put us in an environment we weren't prepared for. Next time, we're going to lose a company."

In the briefings after the raids, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and General Myers gave no indication of the intensity of the resistance near Mullah Omar's house. Rumsfeld also chastised the Pentagon press corps for relying on unnamed military sources in filing the first reports on the raids before the commandos had returned. Rumsfeld said, "You can be certain that I will answer your questions directly when I can and that we'll do our best to give you as much information as we can safely provide." He added, "This is a very open society, and the press knows—you know—almost as much as exists and almost as soon as it exists. And the idea that there is some great iceberg out there that's not known, below water. . . it's just not true."

In the days that followed, as details of the raids filtered through the military system, the Pentagon gave no public hint of the bitter internal debate they had provoked. There was evidence, however, that something had gone wrong. On Sunday, October 21st, the day after the raids, the London *Sunday Telegraph* reported that the United States had requested the immediate assignment to Afghanistan of the entire regiment of Britain's élite commando units, the Special Air Service, or S.A.S. American officials told me that British military authorities assigned to CENTCOM were urging the Pentagon to forgo its airborne operations inside Afghanistan and, instead, bring the war to the Taliban by establishing a large firebase in Afghanistan. The British position, one officer explained, was "We should tell the Taliban, 'We're now part of your grid square' "—that is, in the Taliban's territory. " 'What are you going to do about it?' "

The after-action arguments over how best to wage a ground war continued last week, with many of the senior officers in Delta Force "still outraged," as one military man described it. The Pentagon could not tell the American people the details of what really happened at Kandahar, he added angrily, "because it doesn't want to appear that it doesn't know what it's doing." Another senior military officer told me, "This is the same M.O. that they've used for ten years." He dismissed CENTCOM's planning for the Afghanistan mission as "Special Ops 101," and said, "I don't know where the adult supervision for these operations is. Franks"— the CENTCOM commander—"is clueless." Of Delta Force the officer said, "These guys have had a case of the ass since Mogadishu. They want to do it right and they train hard. Don't put them on something stupid." He paused, and said, "We'll get there, but it's going to get ugly."

A senior official acknowledged that there were serious problems in the war effort thus far, but said, "It's like reading a six-hundred-page murder mystery. It's solved on the last few pages, but you have to read five hundred and ninety-eight pages to get there." ♦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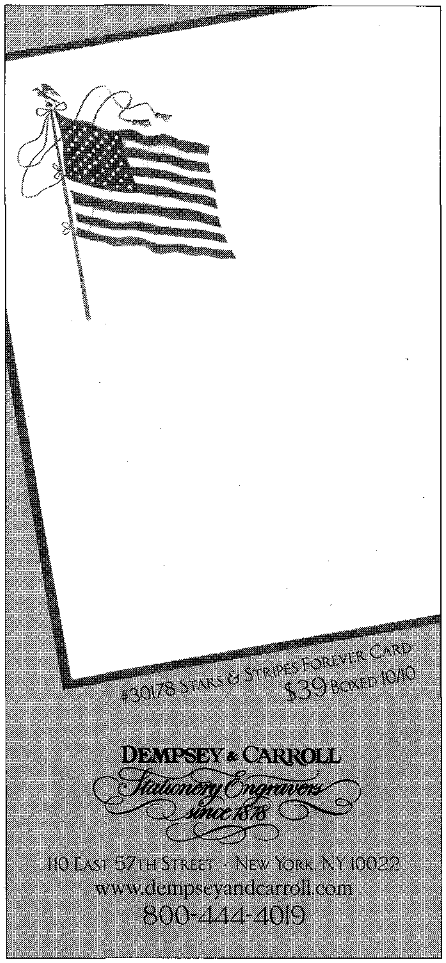
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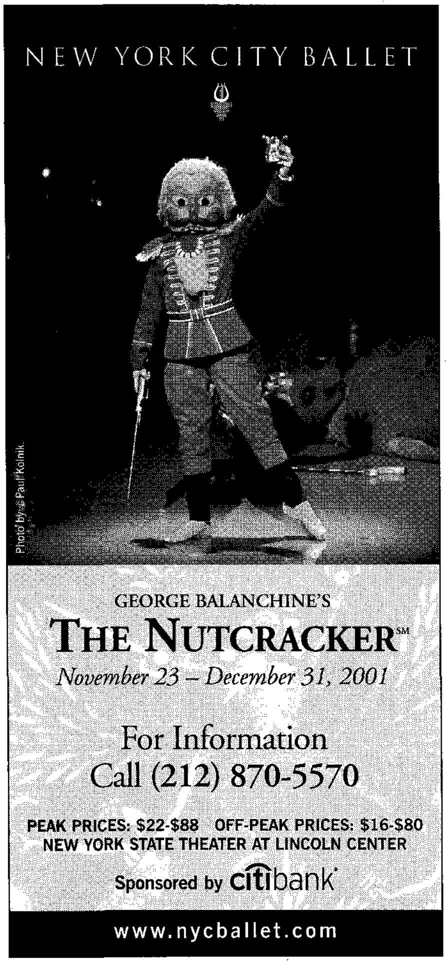
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THE POLITICAL SCENE

THE HOUSE OF BIN LADEN

A family's, and a nation's, divided loyalties.

BY JANE MAYER

Muhammad bin Laden (left), Osama's father, with the future King Faisal, in the fifties.

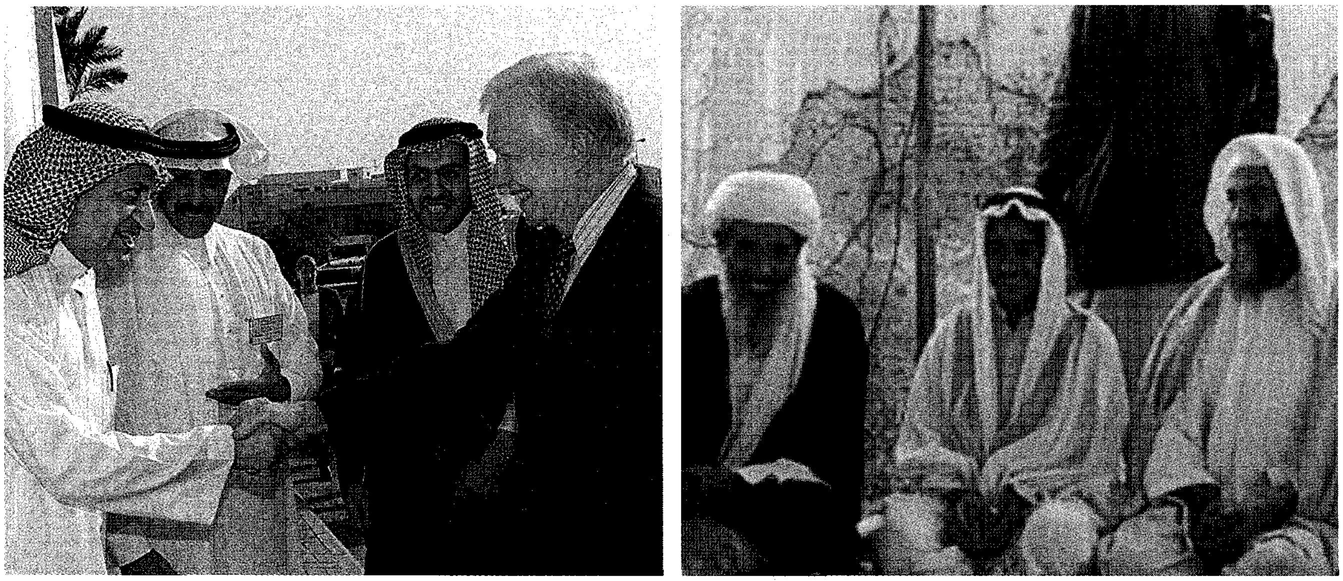
On September 11th, Wafah Binladin, a twenty-six-year-old graduate of Columbia Law School, was finishing the summer holidays with her family in Geneva. Wafah's father, Yeslam, is the Geneva-based head of the Binladin family's European holding company, the Saudi Investment Company. When she learned of the terror attacks on America, Wafah, who lived in a rented loft in SoHo, became frantic. She knew several people who lived and worked in the area of the World Trade Center, and she repeatedly tried to reach friends in New York. "I was in shock," she recalled, when I reached her in Switzerland recently. "All I thought about was the people in those buildings. I couldn't get hold of my friends. . . . I live only ten blocks away. Every night, I'd walk home, down West Broadway, looking up at the Twin Towers. I have pictures of myself there with my friends. We went to Windows on the World. I kept thinking, How can anyone do such a thing?" Later, she says, she heard the news that the prime suspect was her uncle Osama bin Laden. (Some members of the family prefer "Binladin.") "I thought then, Oh, no! I'll never be able to go back to the States again."

In Cambridge, Massachusetts, meanwhile, another uncle, Abdullah bin Laden, a handsome, slightly built graduate of Harvard Law School, learned about the attack while ordering coffee at Starbucks. Abdullah, who is thirty-five and a half brother of Osama bin Laden, rushed back to his apartment to watch the news, arriving just in time to see the second plane crash, into the south tower of the World Trade Center.

By mid-October, Abdullah, who was ordinarily clean-shaven, started to let his beard grow. People who knew him well realized that he was preparing to shed his Western ways. (He lived in an apartment overlooking the Charles River, spent leisure time piloting private planes at nearby Hanscom Airfield, and dreamed of working at a Manhattan law firm.) Instead, he said not long ago, over lunch at an Afghani restaurant in Boston, he was returning home to Saudi Arabia. His mission was to persuade other members of his family—fifty siblings among them—that they had

AFP

to publicly put more distance between themselves and Osama or risk losing their reputation as honorable businessmen. The bin Laden family owns and runs a five-billion-dollar-a-year global corporation that includes the largest construction firm in the Islamic world, with offices in London and Geneva.



Yahya, one of Osama's brothers, with former President Carter last year; Osama at the wedding of his son Muhammad, in January.

LEFT: AAS/SIPA; RIGHT: ALJAZEERA TV/AP

Abdullah is still conferring with many of his siblings at family compounds in Riyadh and Jidda. He has yet to get the family to agree upon a joint public statement. The reason, according to some people who have been in touch with the bin Ladens, is that the family, despite its pro-American reputation, holds loyalties that are more complicated than either Abdullah or the family's many influential American friends, defenders, and business partners might have known. (The family keeps tens and possibly hundreds of millions of dollars invested in American companies and financial institutions.) "There's obviously a lot of spin by the Saudi Binladin Group"—the family's corporate name—"to distinguish itself from Osama," Vincent Cannistraro, a former C.I.A. counter-terrorism chief, told me. "I've been following the bin Ladens for years, and it's easy to say, 'We disown him.' Many in the family have. But blood is usually thicker than water."

A Washington business partner of the bin Ladens, who does not want his name used, out of fear that his family might be harassed, said, "People keep asking me, 'Why aren't they on TV denouncing him? Are they really separate?' " Some relatives, such as Wafah and her mother, Carmen, who are estranged from the family (Carmen is seeking a divorce from Yeslam), issued personal statements of grief and regret. But, last week, plans by Yeslam to speak to an American audience through Dan Rather, of CBS, were put on hold, apparently when an older brother counselled against it.

There appear to be two related difficulties in the bin Ladens' response. According to a knowledgeable source, the Saudi royal family, whose patronage and favor are at the foundation of the bin Laden family fortune, is concerned about possible political repercussions from any statements. As President Bush demands that the countries of the world choose sides, and declare whether they are with the United States or with Osama bin Laden, for some members of the bin Laden family—and for many other conflicted Saudis, too—the situation is so complex that they would have to respond "Both."

"The Saudi royal family and the bin Laden family are walking the same fine line," the Washington business partner of the bin Ladens said. "On one hand, the family should hire a great P.R. firm and a great lawyer, and take out ads, like Bayer"—a reference to the pharmaceutical company and its antibiotic Cipro. "But to do that they'd have to denounce Osama." Some American and European intelligence officials told me that several members of the bin Laden family sympathize with Osama. These officials also acknowledged that with a family that large—it may number as many as six hundred, when one counts all the relatives—conflicts are inevitable.

"This war in a way is really about himself, and the values of his own family," said Adil Najam, a professor of international relations at Boston University, who has studied the rise of Osama bin Laden. "His rampage is against the Saudi establishment, which he says is not Islamic enough. But his own family *is* the Saudi establishment." Yossef Bodansky, the director of the congressional task force on terrorism and unconventional warfare, and a biographer of bin Laden, sees the situation slightly differently. "Osama isn't at war against his family," he said. "He is fighting to save his family. He sees the corruption of his family as one of the manifestations of the reach of the West." Bodansky continued, "Look, bin Laden is probably right—a value system he cares about dearly is succumbing to the onslaught of Western civilization. . . . He's absolutely correct in principle. But his conclusion that there is no escape but provoking world war leaves a lot to be desired."

When, in a 1998 edict, bin Laden commanded his followers to kill Americans and their allies, military and civilian, this presumably included his niece

Victoria Roberts

"You're sad about the wrong things, Albert."

Wafah. She was born an American citizen when Yeslam was studying at the University of Southern California, in Los Angeles. She was raised for the most part in Switzerland—her father recently became a Swiss citizen—and she grew up so removed from the family's roots that her first language was French. Last year, she completed an internship at the New York law firm of Schulte Roth & Zabel. A partner at the firm, who asked not to be quoted by name, describes Wafah as "conscientious, serious, and quite ambitious." In conversation, she sounds much like any high-spirited and opinionated young American. "I love American movies," she told me. "I love American music, like Destiny's Child and Mariah Carey. I love Madonna. And Michael and Janet Jackson, too. I like modern men. I love Jennifer Lopez—I think she's the most beautiful woman in the world!"

Around two dozen other American-based members of the bin Laden family, most of them here to study in colleges and prep schools, were said to be in the United States at the time of the attacks. The New York *Times* reported that they were quickly called together by officials from the Saudi Embassy, which feared that they might become the victims of American reprisals. With approval from the F.B.I., according to a Saudi official, the bin Ladens flew by private jet from Los Angeles to Orlando, then on to Washington, and finally to Boston. Once the F.A.A. permitted overseas flights, the jet flew to Europe. United States officials apparently needed little persuasion from the Saudi Ambassador in Washington, Prince Bandar bin Sultan, that the extended bin Laden family included no material witnesses. The Saudi Embassy says that the family coöperated with the F.B.I. The Saudi government has said that the family signed a statement officially disowning Osama in 1994, a year after the first terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. The Saudi government also stripped bin Laden of his citizenship, which resulted in self-exile to Sudan. When I asked a senior United States intelligence officer whether anyone had considered detaining members of the family, he replied, "That's called taking hostages. We don't do that."

In criminal cases, it is common practice to bring relatives of defendants before grand juries. But Abdullah, the only relation who had remained in the United States—he stayed in Boston for almost a month—said that he was never questioned in person. He would have been willing to help, he said; an F.B.I. agent telephoned, but they spoke only briefly. Abdullah added that he has not seen Osama for several years, when they attended family gatherings on such occasions as Ramadan, and that he has no more idea how to find him than anyone else does.

During the meal in Boston, Abdullah referred to his brother in embarrassed tones only as "Mr. O." A number of American acquaintances, including several members of the Harvard faculty, attest to the family's distance from Osama. (The university has received from the Saudi Binladin Group donations totalling two million dollars to further Islamic scholarship there.) Abdullah said that he admires America, where he has lived periodically for the past decade, and that he abhors terrorism. He disagrees with Osama's radical fundamentalist interpretation of the Koran; he also accepts the permanent existence of an Israeli state. "Most of my family are moderates," he said. "We are businesspeople, that's what we are about."

• •

While the Saudi government was removing the bin Laden family members from American legal jurisdiction, at home it took other precautions, two sources say. According to Saad Al-Fagih, a London-based surgeon and Saudi dissident, who heads a group called Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia, Osama bin Laden's oldest son is being closely watched by the Saudi government, which has restricted his travel from the kingdom for the past five years. Al-Fagih said that the son, Abdullah Osama bin Laden, who is in his early twenties and works for the family business, is one of some fifteen children that Osama has had with three or four wives. "He is being held as a tool," Al-Fagih said. "He's been imprisoned within the boundaries of Saudi Arabia. He lives with the others, but he's kept from leaving the airport." Al-Fagih claimed that the Saudis have "sent a message to Osama that 'If you hurt us, we will hurt your son.' "

Abdel Bari Atwan, the editor of *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, an Arabic daily newspaper in Britain, interviewed Osama bin Laden in November, 1996, and is well acquainted with people close to bin Laden. He agreed that "the travel of Osama's eldest son, Abdullah, is restricted," and that he cannot leave Saudi Arabia easily. Atwan added, "Although the son works with his uncle, he has never disowned his father."

Two weeks ago, a London-based Arabic newspaper, *Asharq Al-Awsat*, carried an interview with Abdullah, who confirmed that he works with the

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

IDEAS FOR DIABETES-FRIENDLY EATING

Nearly 16 million Americans are plagued with diabetes, a condition causing dangerously high blood sugar levels that can lead to serious health problems. Though there still is no known cure, there are steps that diabetics can take to help maintain a normal lifestyle. Here are a few simple tips on how to strike the right balance for a healthy diet.

PERSONAL, PRACTICAL, POSSIBLE

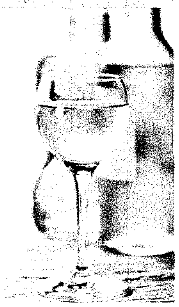
In order for a plan to be effective, it must be achievable. Adults with Type 2 diabetes should consult with a professional nutritionist or dietician who can help them create a personalized plan that works for them. Goals should be positive but practical.

WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO LOSE?

Overweight individuals are at a greater risk for developing Type 2 diabetes than those who maintain a healthy weight. For adults living with the disease, obesity can increase the risk of developing serious vascular problems, including coronary artery disease, peripheral vascular disease and stroke. Maintaining a healthier body weight can help to reduce these risks. By working with a health care professional to develop a regular exercise plan and diet to lower overall caloric intake, diabetics can improve glycemic levels in the short term and increase long-term metabolic control.

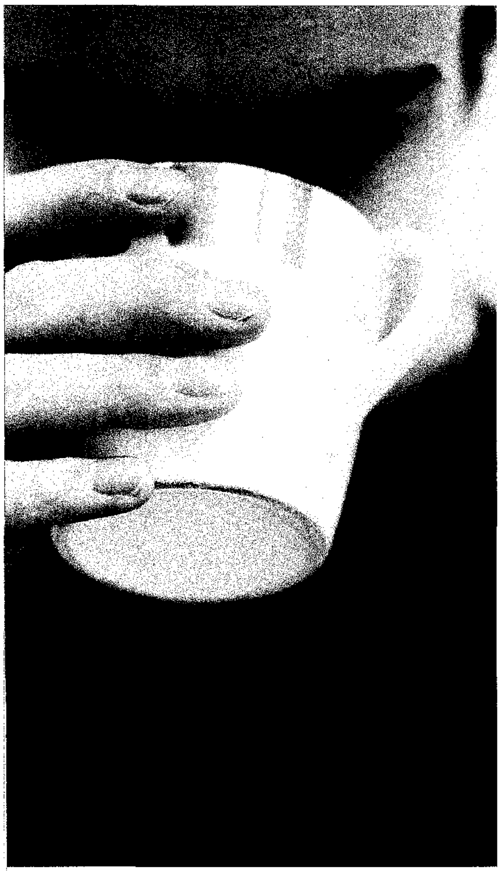
BALANCING ACT

In general, diabetics have the same nutritional requirements as everybody else. Daily diets must always be carefully monitored. To ensure that blood pressure, sugar and fat levels are kept under control, strike the right balance by counting both grams and calories. Empty calories, which take up valuable



For diabetics, alcohol is not forbidden fruit. But it can be a dangerous indulgence. Be sure to include it in your daily calorie count:

- Count each drink as two fat servings
- Watch for carbohydrates found in beer and wine
- Monitor effects of alcohol on blood pressure
- Drink in moderation (one drink per day for women, two per day for men)



space in the diet and add unwanted fat and cholesterol, should be eaten in moderation. Problem foods do not need to be avoided altogether, but they should be enjoyed in smaller serving sizes and eaten less often. While there is no one simple recipe for a healthy diet, there are basic guidelines that diabetics can follow. Tailor meal plans according to weight, age, cholesterol level and personal preferences. By factoring in those considerations and following the basic guidelines below, it is possible to build the solid foundation on which to balance a healthy diet:

MAKE IT COUNT

Protein: 10-20 %

Protein intake should come primarily from grains and vegetables instead of meats, which contain higher levels of fat and cholesterol and can increase the risk of heart disease.

Fat: < 30 %

While recommended fat intake should not exceed 30%, saturated fats should comprise no more than 10% of the diet.

Carbohydrates: 40-45 %

Despite popular myth, diabetics can have their cake and eat it too. With carbohydrates—which include grains, sugar and alcohol—it's not what you eat, but how much. Because complex carbohydrates have the greatest effect on blood sugar levels, they must always be monitored carefully.

TRIM THE FAT

In order to reduce the amount of fat in your diet, try the following:

MEAT

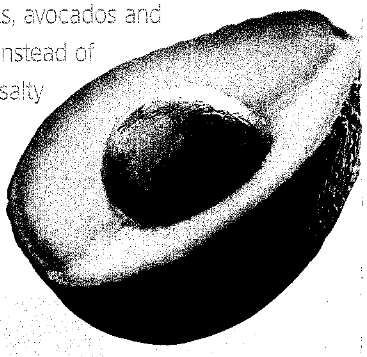
- Stick to lean meats with naturally lower fat content
- Remove visible fat from meats prior to cooking
- Employ cooking techniques, like grilling, which naturally reduce fat

DAIRY

- Try cooking with canola or olive oil instead of butter
- Avoid excess fat by choosing part-skim or low-cal cheeses
- Use margarine or other low-fat spreads

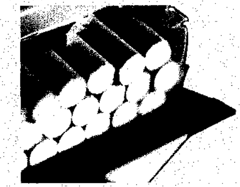
Satisfy cravings while sticking to your diet with the following healthy alternatives:

- Chew on dried fruit for a sweet and healthy snack
- Sweeten your coffee with artificial sweeteners rather than sugar
- Try nuts, avocados and olives instead of fattier salty snacks

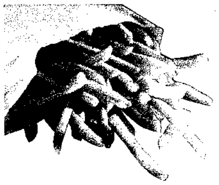


RISKY BUSINESS

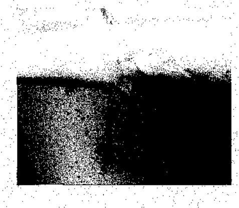
In addition to containing complex carbohydrates, which raise blood sugar levels, sugary desserts contain "empty calories": calories with little nutritional value. Replace empty calories with foods that contain more of the vitamins and minerals your body needs.



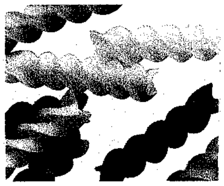
Kick the habit. Not only do cigarettes cause cancer, but they increase the risk of heart disease and stroke by raising fat levels found in the blood. Quitting smoking will reduce your risk for serious health complications.



Excess fat and cholesterol increase your risk for heart disease and can raise blood pressure, putting you at risk for other serious health problems. Avoiding foods that are high in saturated fats will help to reduce those risks.



Alcohol contains hidden calories, fat, and carbohydrates while offering little or no nutritional value. It can also worsen high blood pressure and even cause diabetic nerve damage. Keep alcohol intake at a minimum.



Because our bodies turn carbohydrates into sugar when breaking them down, they have a direct affect on our blood sugar levels. Whether your weakness is pasta or pastry, monitor your carbohydrates carefully to maintain a diabetes-safe diet.

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Important Information:

GLUCOPHAGE XR is not for everyone. In rare cases, GLUCOPHAGE XR may cause lactic acidosis (buildup of lactic acid in the blood) which is serious and can be fatal in half the cases. This occurs mainly in people whose kidneys are not functioning properly. Tell your doctor about your alcohol use because it can affect your risk. You should not take this drug if you: have kidney problems, are 80 or older (unless your kidneys are tested), are taking medication for heart failure, are seriously dehydrated, have a severe infection, or have or have had liver disease. The most common side effect is diarrhea.

Please see additional important patient information on the next page.

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What are GLUCOPHAGE and GLUCOPHAGE XR?

GLUCOPHAGE and GLUCOPHAGE XR are used to treat type 2 diabetes. This is also known as non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus. People with type 2 diabetes are not able to make enough insulin or respond normally to the insulin their bodies make. When this happens, sugar (glucose) builds up in the blood. This can lead to serious medical problems including kidney damage, amputations, and blindness. Diabetes is also closely linked to heart disease. The main goal of treating diabetes is to lower your blood sugar to a normal level.

High blood sugar can be lowered by diet and exercise, by a number of medicines taken by mouth, and by insulin shots. Before you take GLUCOPHAGE or GLUCOPHAGE XR, try to control your diabetes by exercise and weight loss. While you take your diabetes medicine, continue to exercise and follow the diet advised for your diabetes. No matter what your recommended diabetes management plan is, studies have shown that maintaining good blood sugar control can prevent or delay complications of diabetes, such as blindness.

GLUCOPHAGE and GLUCOPHAGE XR have the same active ingredient. However, GLUCOPHAGE XR works longer in your body. Both of these medicines help control your blood sugar in a number of ways. These include helping your body respond better to the insulin it makes naturally, decreasing the amount of sugar your liver makes, and decreasing the amount of sugar your intestines absorb. GLUCOPHAGE and GLUCOPHAGE XR do not cause your body to make more insulin. Because of this, when taken alone, they rarely cause hypoglycemia (low blood sugar), and usually do not cause weight gain. However, when they are taken with a sulfonylurea or with insulin, hypoglycemia is more likely to occur, as is weight gain.

WARNING: A small number of people who have taken GLUCOPHAGE have developed a serious condition called lactic acidosis. Lactic acidosis is caused by a buildup of lactic acid in the blood. This happens more often in people with kidney problems. Most people with kidney problems should not take GLUCOPHAGE or GLUCOPHAGE XR. (See "What are the side effects of GLUCOPHAGE and GLUCOPHAGE XR?")

Who should not take GLUCOPHAGE or GLUCOPHAGE XR?

Some conditions increase your chance of getting lactic acidosis, or cause other problems if you take either of these medicines. Most of the conditions listed below can increase your chance of getting lactic acidosis.

Do not take GLUCOPHAGE or GLUCOPHAGE XR if you:

- have kidney problems
- have liver problems
- have heart failure that is treated with medicines, such as Lanoxin® (digoxin) or Lasix® (furosemide)
- drink a lot of alcohol. This means you binge drink for short periods or drink all the time
- are seriously dehydrated (have lost a lot of water from your body)
- are going to have an x-ray procedure with injection of dyes (contrast agents)
- are going to have surgery
- develop a serious condition, such as heart attack, severe infection, or a stroke
- are 80 years or older and you have NOT had your kidney function tested

Tell your doctor if you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. GLUCOPHAGE and GLUCOPHAGE XR may not be right for you. Talk with your doctor about your choices. You should also discuss your choices with your doctor if you are nursing a child.

Can GLUCOPHAGE or GLUCOPHAGE XR be used in children?

GLUCOPHAGE has been shown to effectively lower glucose levels in children (ages 10 to 16 years) with type 2 diabetes. GLUCOPHAGE has not been studied in children younger than 10 years old. GLUCOPHAGE has not been studied in combination with other oral glucose-control medicines or insulin in children. If you have any questions about the use of GLUCOPHAGE in children, talk with your doctor or other healthcare provider.

GLUCOPHAGE XR has not been studied in children.

How should I take GLUCOPHAGE or GLUCOPHAGE XR?

Your doctor will tell you how much medicine to take and when to take it. You will probably start out with a low dose of the medicine. Your doctor may slowly increase your dose until your blood sugar is better controlled. You should take GLUCOPHAGE or GLUCOPHAGE XR with meals.

Your doctor may have you take other medicines along with GLUCOPHAGE or GLUCOPHAGE XR to control your blood sugar. These medicines may include insulin shots. Taking GLUCOPHAGE or GLUCOPHAGE XR with insulin may help you better control your blood sugar while reducing the insulin dose.

Continue your exercise and diet program and test your blood sugar regularly while taking GLUCOPHAGE or GLUCOPHAGE XR. Your doctor will monitor your diabetes and may perform blood tests on you from time to time to make sure your kidneys and your liver are functioning normally. There is no evidence that GLUCOPHAGE or GLUCOPHAGE XR causes harm to the liver or kidneys.

Tell your doctor if you

- have an illness that causes severe vomiting, diarrhea or fever, or if you drink a much lower amount of liquid than normal. These conditions can lead to severe dehydration (loss of water in your body). You may need to stop taking GLUCOPHAGE or GLUCOPHAGE XR for a short time.
- plan to have surgery or an x-ray procedure with injection of dye (contrast agent). You may need to stop taking GLUCOPHAGE (metformin hydrochloride tablets) or GLUCOPHAGE XR (metformin hydrochloride extended-release tablets) for a short time.
- start to take other medicines or change how you take a medicine. GLUCOPHAGE and GLUCOPHAGE XR can affect how well other drugs work, and some drugs can affect how well GLUCOPHAGE and GLUCOPHAGE XR work. Some medicines may cause high blood sugar.

GLUCOPHAGE XR must be swallowed whole and never crushed or chewed. Occasionally, the inactive of GLUCOPHAGE XR may be eliminated as a soft mass in your stool that may look like the original tablet; this is not harmful and will not affect the way GLUCOPHAGE XR works to control your diabetes.

What should I avoid while taking GLUCOPHAGE or GLUCOPHAGE XR?

Do not drink a lot of alcoholic drinks while taking GLUCOPHAGE or GLUCOPHAGE XR. This means you should not binge drink for short periods, and you should not drink a lot of alcohol on a regular basis. Alcohol can increase the chance of getting lactic acidosis.

What are the side effects of GLUCOPHAGE and GLUCOPHAGE XR?

Lactic Acidosis. **In rare cases, GLUCOPHAGE and GLUCOPHAGE XR can cause a serious side effect called lactic acidosis. This is caused by a buildup of lactic acid in your blood. This build-up can cause serious damage.** Lactic acidosis caused by GLUCOPHAGE and GLUCOPHAGE XR is rare and has occurred mostly in people whose kidneys were not working normally. Lactic acidosis has been reported in about one in 33,000 patients taking GLUCOPHAGE over the course of a year. Although rare, if lactic acidosis does occur, it can be fatal in up to half the people who develop it.

It is also important for your liver to be working normally when you take GLUCOPHAGE or GLUCOPHAGE XR. Your liver helps remove lactic acid from your blood.

Make sure you tell your doctor before you use GLUCOPHAGE or GLUCOPHAGE XR if you have kidney or liver problems. You should also **stop using GLUCOPHAGE or GLUCOPHAGE XR and call your doctor right away if you have signs of lactic acidosis. Lactic acidosis is a medical emergency that must be treated in a hospital.**

Signs of lactic acidosis are:

- feeling very weak, tired, or uncomfortable
- unusual muscle pain
- trouble breathing
- unusual or unexpected stomach discomfort
- feeling cold
- feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- suddenly developing a slow or irregular heartbeat

If your medical condition suddenly changes, stop taking GLUCOPHAGE or GLUCOPHAGE XR and call your doctor right away. This may be a sign of lactic acidosis or another serious side effect.

Other Side Effects. Common side effects of GLUCOPHAGE and GLUCOPHAGE XR include diarrhea, nausea, and upset stomach. These side effects generally go away after you take the medicine for a while. Taking your medicine with meals can help reduce these side effects. Tell your doctor if the side effects bother you a lot, last for more than a few weeks, come back after they've gone away, or start later in therapy. You may need a lower dose or need to stop taking the medicine for a short period or for good.

About 3 out of every 100 people who take GLUCOPHAGE or GLUCOPHAGE XR have an unpleasant metallic taste when they start taking the medicine. It lasts for a short time.

GLUCOPHAGE and GLUCOPHAGE XR rarely cause hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) by themselves. However, hypoglycemia can happen if you do not eat enough, if you drink alcohol, or if you take other medicines to lower blood sugar.

General advice about prescription medicines

If you have questions or problems, talk with your doctor or other healthcare provider. You can ask your doctor or pharmacist for the information about GLUCOPHAGE and GLUCOPHAGE XR that is written for health care professionals. Medicines are sometimes prescribed for purposes other than those listed in a patient information leaflet. Do not use GLUCOPHAGE or GLUCOPHAGE XR for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not share your medicine with other people.

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family construction company in Jidda. He spoke of his "allegiance to the Kingdom's leadership," but he defended his father, whom he said he had not seen for six years. He was not asked whether the government had imposed any restraints on him; he said that he had travelled to Europe as a tourist. He blamed the media for giving the world a "wrong impression" of his father. "My father is a calm and quiet person by nature," he contended. "They have even linked the spread of anthrax to him without any proof or evidence." With the family's blessing, Abdullah said, he had married a relative, and now has two young children.

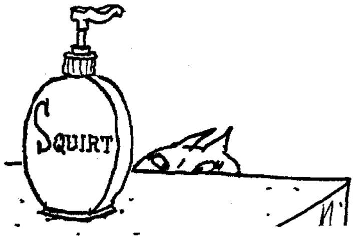
Cannistraro, the former C.I.A. antiterror expert, believes that many family members have cut off all contact with Osama, and revile his tactics. But there is also, he suggested, "an interconnectedness" among others in the family which frustrates and tantalizes American investigators. He told me that as recently as nine months ago an allied intelligence agency had seen two of Osama's sisters apparently taking cash to an airport in Abu Dhabi, where they are suspected of handing it to a member of bin Laden's Al Qaeda organization. (Tim Metz, the family spokesman, said that the intelligence report was "unfair and impossible to check without more detail.") "Some of the sisters are very religious," Al-Fagih said, "and they believe that even if your brother is a real criminal he is your brother. He's got to live comfortably." Under Shariah, Islamic law, Al-Fagih said, it is unjust to deprive any member of a family of his rightful inheritance. Some of Osama's siblings are troubled by a decision that the Saudi government made, in 1994, to freeze his assets, including part of an inheritance, estimated at thirty million dollars, that Osama, like all the sons in the family, received. (The daughters, in accordance with Islamic law, each inherited half as much.) "Many of Osama's brothers and sisters think it is sinful if they keep any of his inheritance money," Al-Fagih said.

According to Cannistraro, Saudi sources observed several of Osama's children travelling between Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan without restrictions. He doubts news reports that Osama spoke with his mother shortly before the September 11th attack. Rather, Cannistraro said, he has been told that the Saudis have conveyed messages from her to her son in recent years, begging him to quit his terrorist campaign.

Both Al-Fagih and Abdel Bari Atwan claim that bin Laden's mother has twice met with her son since he moved to Afghanistan, in 1996. Atwan said that a trip in the spring of 1998 was arranged by Prince Turki al-Faisal, then the head of Saudi intelligence. Turki was in charge of the "Afghanistan file," and had long-standing ties to bin Laden and the Taliban. Indeed, Osama, before becoming an enemy of the state, had been something of a Turki protégé, according to his biographers. Prince Turki, Al-Fagih said, "made arrangements for Osama's mother and his stepfather to visit him and persuade him to stop what he was doing." When Al-Fagih was asked about bin Laden's response, he said, "He is very close to his mother, so he thought it was nice to see his mother. It's a free trip. He tries not to discuss his views with his mother. They talk about health, and children. But he didn't promise anything."

The second trip, according to Al-Fagih, occurred last spring. "The royal family approved it," Al-Fagih, who is eager to turn the United States against the Saudi royal family, told me. "It was not just a family affair. It was to try to approach and influence him. They wanted to find out his intentions concerning the royal family. They gave him the impression that they wouldn't crack down on his followers in Saudi Arabia" as long as he set his sights on targets outside the desert kingdom. Last January, the Qatar-based news network Al-Jazeera broadcast footage of what was purported to be the wedding of bin Laden's son Muhammad. Three siblings from a later marriage of Osama's mother were in attendance.

Cannistraro believes that Prince Turki made two trips to meet with bin Laden, although he said that he was unaware of any role played by Osama's mother. He also said that he had been able to verify independently that on one of the trips the Saudis made "a large monetary offer" to bin Laden, consisting of tens of millions of dollars, if he would agree to end his murderous political rebellion.



Gaafar Allagany, the director of the Saudi information office at the Saudi Embassy in Washington, said that he knew of no restrictions on the travel of any bin Laden family members, or of any contacts between them and bin Laden since his move to Afghanistan. "These are private citizens," Allagany said. "I don't know what they do. I can't find out, either." Allagany also said that "nobody in the Saudi government has facilitated any meeting or communication between members of the bin Laden family and Osama bin Laden since he moved from Sudan to Afghanistan."

One of Osama's half sisters is married to Mohammed Jamal Khalifa, an Islamic militant who American authorities believe helped to fund the burgeoning terrorist movement in the Philippines in the early nineteen-nineties. During this period, Khalifa established a rattan-furniture export business in Manila and is believed to have received large donations of cash from outside the country, some of which, intelligence officials suspect, may have been funnelled to him by Al Qaeda. In 1995, Khalifa was arrested in San Francisco on charges of violating United States immigration laws. He was detained while the Justice Department tried but failed to gather enough information to charge him in connection with suspected terrorist activities. Eventually, he was deported to Jordan, which had an outstanding warrant for him on charges stemming from the bombing of movie theatres in Amman in 1994. He was acquitted. In 1996, Khalifa returned to Saudi Arabia, where he still lives. When I asked Allagany about Khalifa, he said, "I'd be lying if I said I know anything about him. He's a brother-in-law. In Saudi Arabia, that's not even considered part of the family."

Yeslam Binladin, meanwhile, has issued a statement denouncing his half brother Osama; he has told reporters that his real passions are tennis and flying. He has nonetheless attracted the scrutiny of Swiss and American investigators because of a financial stake he has in a Swiss aviation firm. By a seeming coincidence, he paid for flight instruction for an acquaintance at Huffman Aviation, the training school in Venice, Florida, that many of the suicide hijackers attended. When I asked Yeslam about this, he replied in a fax from Geneva that while he had subsidized the flying lessons, he was not involved in picking the flight school. He said that he has had no contact with his half brother for more than twenty years, has never supported him either politically or financially, and has not been back to Saudi Arabia for thirteen years. "As you know," he said, "I come from a large family, where my father had several wives. Every wife had her own house and lived with her own children. He and I do not come from the same mother."

The remarkable rise of the bin Ladens begins with Osama's father, Muhammad bin Oud bin Laden. "His people were either Yemeni slaves or Yemeni laborers," Stanley Guess, a former United States military test pilot who flew the father around the kingdom in the early nineteen-sixties, said. "Either way, you couldn't get much lower." Although Muhammad was illiterate, Guess told me, "he was a genius in many ways. His mind was like a computer for figures." He was a talented engineer, and Guess believes that in the nineteen-fifties Muhammad won the favor of King Saud, who was confined to a wheelchair, by building him a ramp so that he could be pushed up to the second floor of his palace. Other sources have pointed to Muhammad's skill at building a road full of hairpin turns up a nearly sheer cliff, in order to shorten the royal family's commute to the summer palace in At Taif.

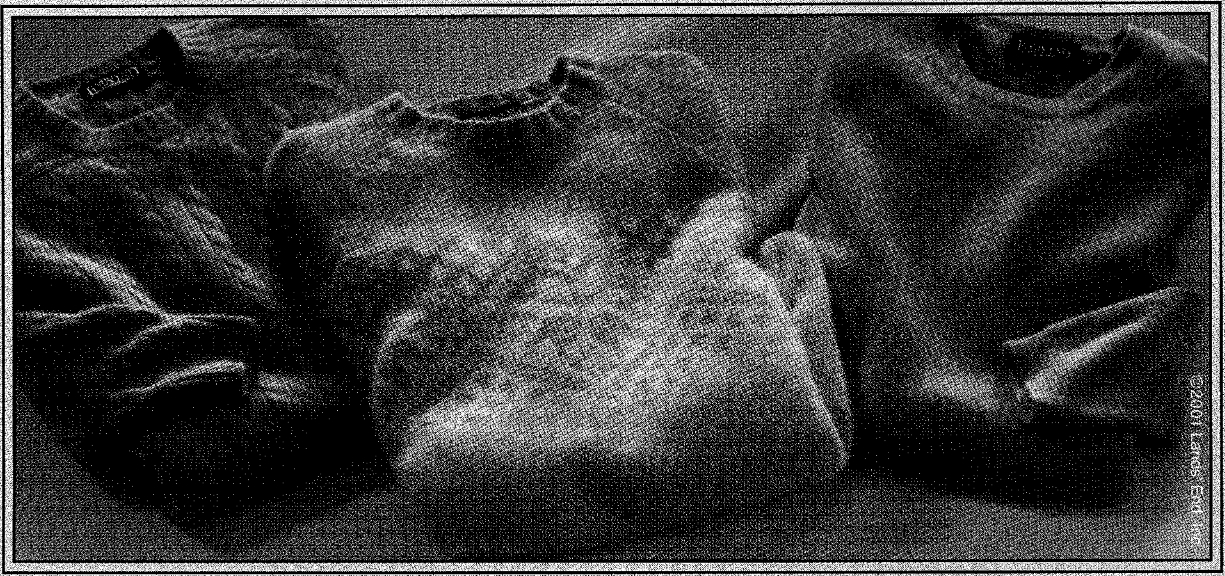
When Faisal ascended the throne, in 1964, the new king thanked Muhammad by giving him the contract to build virtually every road in the country, which at the time, according to Guess, had only one well-paved route, from Riyadh to Dhahran. Generous though these contracts were, they don't compare with the contract that the bin Laden family was given by the royal family in 1973 to rebuild the Islamic holy sites at Mecca and Medina, a project so prestigious and ambitious that it has been likened to rebuilding Vatican City. The renovation, which began as the kingdom experienced a rush of oil dollars and is estimated to have cost seventeen billion dollars so far, continues with no completion date in sight.

Guess and others said that although Muhammad was an observant Muslim, he "was certainly not a fanatic." And because Muhammad had eleven acknowledged wives during his lifetime—four at once, as is allowed under Islamic law—Osama almost certainly grew up in a separate household from his father. Indeed, the patriarch moved freely among the households of his various wives. "Muhammad was peculiar about his women," Guess said. The pilot recalls that Muhammad once brought three or four wives on a trip with him, but that he insisted that they not return together to Jidda until nightfall, "because he didn't want anyone seeing them." Much speculation has been printed about the psychological dynamics within the bin Laden family; sources in the Saudi royal family have painted Osama as a stigmatized outsider, because he was the only child of a less favored, foreign-born Syrian wife. But Yeslam's estranged wife, Carmen, told me that she never detected any distance between Osama and the rest of the family: "In front of me, they never disowned Osama. They spoke of him as a brother." She acknowledged, however, that she has not seen much of the family in years.

In the late sixties, when Osama was about eleven, Muhammad was killed in a plane crash. Osama's oldest brother, Salem, by most accounts a debonair and Westernized figure, who had attended Millfield, the English boarding school, took over the family empire. Salem brought the family into the modern world; he was, one American friend says, "as at home in London and Paris as he was in Jidda." A former United States diplomat in Saudi Arabia says, "I used to call him the playboy of the Western world." An enthusiastic amateur rock guitarist, Salem loved to jam with bands and go disco dancing when he was in the United States on business trips, in the nineteen-seventies. He was married to an English art student, Caroline Carey, whose half brother Ambrose is the son of the Marquess of Queensberry.

Salem's ties to America may have been not just cultural and commercial but political as well. During the nineteen-eighties, when the Reagan Administration secretly arranged for an estimated thirty-four million dollars to be funnelled through Saudi Arabia to the

WILD BILL HICKOK
REALLY WILD BILL HICKOK



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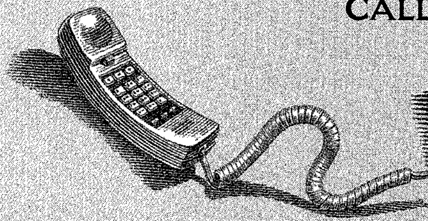

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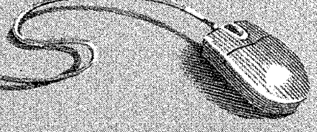

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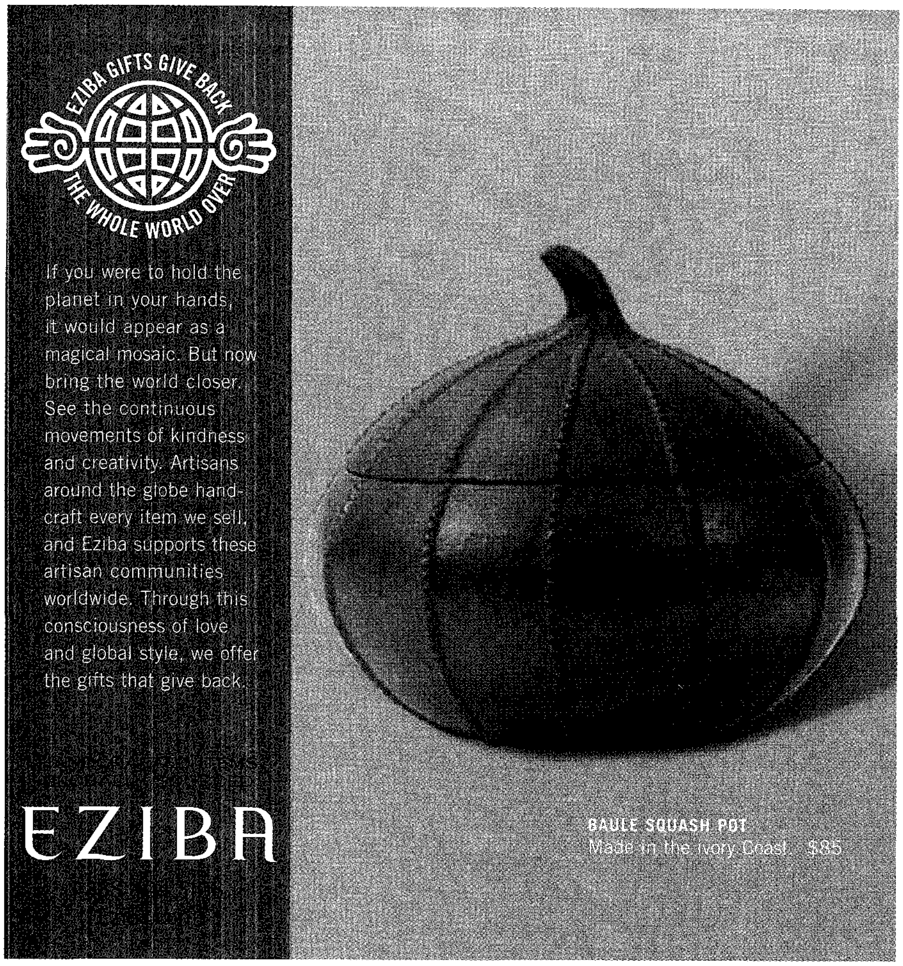

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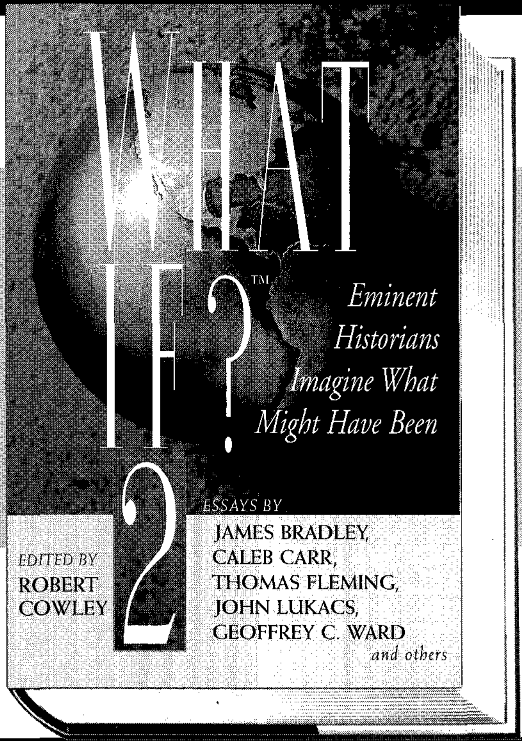
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Contras, in Nicaragua, Salem bin Laden aided in this cause, according to French intelligence. Salem was reportedly one of the two closest friends of the King, and was frequently sought out by American diplomats and businessmen. (In 1993, the family hired Philip Griffin, the former American consul-general in Jidda, to work as its American representative in Washington.)

In 1988, Salem was killed outside San Antonio, Texas, when an experimental ultralight plane that he was flying got tangled in power lines. Leadership of the family business passed to the next eldest bin Laden brother, Bakr, whose style and orientation were more conservative. The family’s commercial ties to the West, however, burgeoned. Currently, the company employs some thirty-two thousand people in thirty countries. A veteran lobbyist in Washington who knows the family well said, “The bin Ladens understand capitalism and the West better than I do, and they’ve made a lot more money, too.”

Over the years, there have been warm, substantial ties between members of the bin Laden family and leaders of the foreign-policy establishment in America and Britain. Until late last month, the family had a stake amounting to two million dollars in the Washington-based Carlyle Group, a private equity firm with a large interest in defense contracting. The Carlyle Group is known for its politically connected executives such as former President George H. W. Bush, former Secretary of State James Baker, and former British Prime Minister John Major. In the nineteen-nineties, both Bush and Baker visited the bin Laden family when they were prospecting for business in Saudi Arabia. The chairman of the firm is former Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci, who has been a trusted friend of the current Defense Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, since their days on the Princeton wrestling team. Sources inside the firm suggest that there was a spirited discussion among the partners about whether to sever connections with the bin Ladens, with some believing that to penalize the family for guilt by association was, as one put it, “monstrous.” But the prospect of President Bush’s father being in business with the half brother of Osama bin Laden was politically untenable, and, when "the irony became too much," as one insider in the firm put it, the bin Ladens recouped their initial investment, plus five hundred thousand dollars.

The family continues to have a stake, estimated by one source at about ten million dollars, in the Fremont Group, a private investment company, on whose board of directors sits another former Secretary of State, George Shultz. Much of the family's private banking is handled by Citigroup, which is chaired by former Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin. The family has equity investments with Merrill Lynch and Goldman, Sachs. Among the family's business partners is General Electric. A spokesman for Jack Welch, the chairman of G.E., says that the family threw a party for him in the nineteen-nineties in Saudi Arabia, and that Welch "considers them good business partners." One American diplomat says, "You talk about your global investors, it's them. They own part of Microsoft, Boeing, and who knows what else." Others note that the family has been awarded contracts to help rebuild American military installations, including the Khobar Towers, which were damaged in a terrorist attack that killed nineteen servicemen in 1996.

The family's embrace of the West occurred as many in Arab intellectual circles were recoiling from it. Yossef Bodansky, in his biography of bin Laden, writes that the sudden increase in wealth among the Saudi élite, and the concomitant exposure to the West, "led to confusion and a largely unresolved identity crisis resulting in radicalism and eruptions of violence." Osama, who was born in 1957 and was raised largely in the seaport of Jidda, would have been bombarded by anti-Western material from Egypt, which, by 1977, when Anwar Sadat was making a separate peace with Israel, had become a center of radical dissent. In Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, King Faisal was assassinated, in 1975, by a worldly nephew, an act that further stoked suspicions of the West. Bin Laden has cast himself as a messianic religious authority, but his degrees are in civil engineering and economics. Several sources close to the family hint that Osama had wanted to play a major role in the company after college but was marginalized by other brothers, either because he lacked business skills, as one source contends, or because he tried to mount an unsuccessful takeover from his elder brothers. "He started picking fights in the family business having to do with management control," an American friend of the family said. Either way, bin Laden was not welcomed at the helm of the Saudi Binladin Group.

In early 1979, as he was finishing college, the Islamic revolution in Iran overthrew the Shah; the following November, the radical movement swept into Saudi Arabia itself, with the takeover of the Grand Mosque in Mecca by armed Islamic extremists. (It has been reported that one of Osama's half brothers was arrested as a sympathizer of the takeover but was later exonerated.) The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan that same year gave Osama new direction and purpose. On the advice of the royal family, he threw himself into providing financial, organizational, and engineering aid to the mujahideen, who were also heavily funded by the United States. In 1989, he returned home to Saudi Arabia a hero. But, in 1990, when American troops came to the aid of Saudi Arabia, after Iraq invaded Kuwait, bin Laden turned against the throne for inviting infidels into the Islamic holy land. He had hoped to persuade the Saudi government to let him organize a Pan-Arab force, as he had in Afghanistan. But, in an interview with "Frontline," Prince Bandar, the Saudi Ambassador to the United States, said that when he first met bin Laden, in the nineteen-eighties, "I thought he couldn't lead eight ducks across the street."

When bin Laden turned against the United States, his fortune was still interwoven with the family's, which was invested in many American businesses. "It's not as cynical as it sounds," Jack Blum, a former special counsel to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said. "I've met some of the bin Ladens. They're quite nice. You'd have no problem at dinner with them. They are themselves conflicted. They are a contradiction. If you tried to peer into their souls, you'd see two of them." ♦

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THE AMES STRAIN

How a sick cow in Iowa may have helped to create a lethal bioweapon.

BY PETER J. BOYER

On the evening of October 12th, a group of scientists and academics at Iowa State University's veterinary college, in Ames, Iowa, gathered in one of the school's laboratories for a procedure involving the university's collection of *Bacillus anthracis*, the bacteria that causes the disease anthrax. The school's anthrax collection was noteworthy both for what was known about it and for what was merely speculated. What was known was that over the years Iowa State's veterinary microbiologists had accumulated more than a hundred vials containing various strains of anthrax, some dating back to 1928. In 1978, a fondly remembered professor named R. Allen Packer had uncorked one of the fifty-year-old vials and, after a couple of tries, was able to coax the bacillus back to life. The experiment, a testament to the remarkable durability of anthrax spores, had lent a certain distinction to the collection.

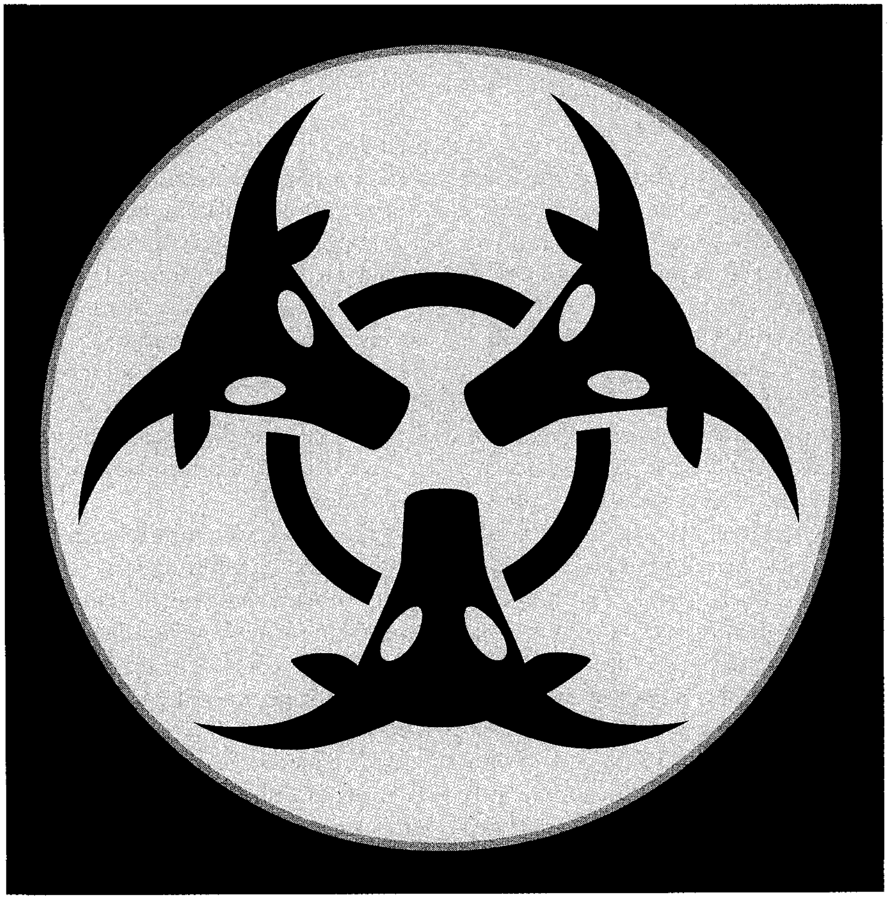
What was speculated about the Iowa State anthrax was even more compelling. One week earlier, on October 5th, a Florida photo editor named Bob Stevens, at American Media Inc., had died of anthrax, the first bioterror fatality in what has come to be known as "the homeland." Early news reports suggested that the F.B.I. had traced the anthrax to a laboratory in Ames, from which the bacteria had perhaps been stolen or otherwise obtained by terrorists.

The reports of an Ames connection to the anthrax terrors caused much excitement in Iowa, and the College of Veterinary Medicine was suddenly fielding scores of calls from reporters wanting to know about the deadly "Ames strain" of anthrax. The trouble was, nobody at the school knew anything about an "Ames strain"—whether it was the strain of anthrax infecting the mail, whether the Iowa State lab had ever possessed it, or even whether there was such a thing as an "Ames strain." None of the vials were identified as "Ames," but then the labels were cryptic, some bearing only numbers or dates.

The scientists and teachers at Iowa State's veterinary school had not been incautious with their anthrax specimens, but neither had they been obsessed with security. The school's anthrax collection had been stored in cabinets in the teaching laboratory, the doors of which were routinely locked at night. In the context of the academy, this relative casualness was not unusual, especially in the heart of the farm belt, where science was employed as a plowshare rather than as a sword. When an associated laboratory nearby, run by the United States Department of Agriculture, had outgrown its building space a few years earlier, it had moved some of its work on anthrax and mad-cow disease to a rented space in an Ames strip mall. But all of that was before the Florida incident.

On October 10th, Governor Tom Vilsack ordered law-enforcement officers to stand guard over the Iowa State laboratory and at the state's other labs with anthrax (including the Agriculture Department's lab in Ames and labs at the University of Iowa). The Iowa State anthrax collection was beginning to seem like more trouble than it was worth, and the college's dean, Norman F. Cheville, after consultation with the lab's director and a school health-and-safety group, decided to do something about it.

Around 5:30 P.M. on October 12th, college staff members wearing biosafety gloves removed the anthrax specimens from the laboratory cabinet and placed them in an autoclave, a steam sterilizer about the size of a filing cabinet. The scientists knew that an hour or so in the autoclave would do the trick, but they let the machine run all night. At eight-



CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

The discovery that the anthrax was natively American widened the range of suspects.

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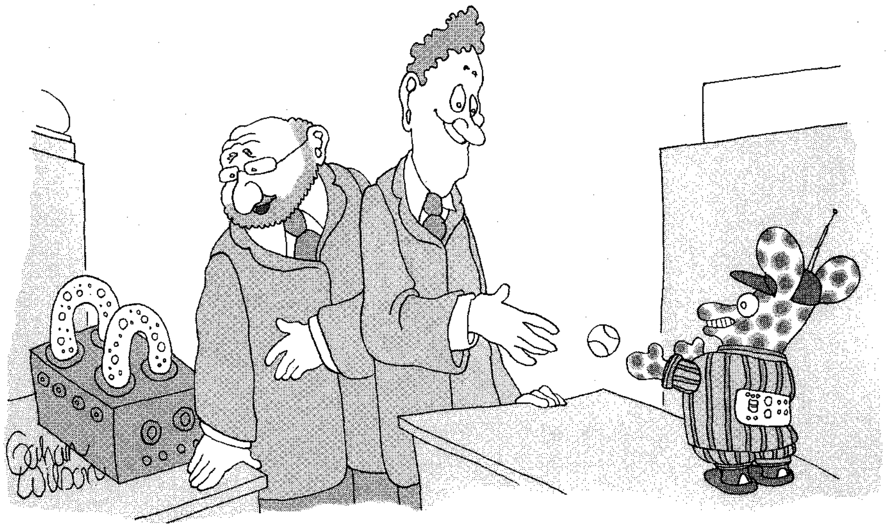


"Still, it would be a great mistake to abandon your work on the perpetual-motion machine."

• •

thirty the following morning, the bacilli, although certainly dead, were placed in an incinerator for good measure. Some of the biologists and academics who attended the destruction felt a trace of regret. "We said to each other, 'This is kind of sad we have to destroy this,' " Dr. Jim Roth, an assistant dean for international programs at the school, recalls. "Especially the cultures we'd had since 1928."

Less than two weeks later, Tom Ridge, the director of Homeland Security, announced at a Washington press conference that investigators had identified the anthrax that had been sent through the mail as belonging to the Ames strain. It now seemed likely that there was an Iowa State connection to the Ames strain, and that the original culture of the Ames isolate was sterilized and incinerated with the rest of the veterinary school's collection. Jim Roth had wondered about that possibility, and the school had contacted the F.B.I. and the Centers for Disease Control before killing the specimens. Both agencies approved the destruction. "They may be having some second thoughts about that, but it's too late now," Roth says.

In its way, the uncertainty about the Iowa State anthrax reflects the larger puzzlement facing federal officials as they have tried to work out the provenance of the anthrax that killed Bob Stevens and at least three others. As investigators try to determine who is behind the bioterror, alternating between theories that its source is foreign or domestic, state-sponsored or freelance, Dr. Roth and his colleagues in Iowa have tried to unravel the problem of the origins of the Ames strain.

What they do know is that it all began with a sick cow, probably somewhere in a pasture in the western part of Iowa, probably in 1979. In all likelihood, a farmer encountered his stricken beast after it was already dead, and had not been witness to the sudden fever, the clumsy staggering, the trembling, and, finally, the convulsions that preceded the animal's death. Anthrax seizes and consumes its victims quickly. The farmer might have suspected anthrax, a diagnosis probably confirmed by his veterinarian immediately upon encountering the carcass. In most ways, the beast would have looked good, even healthy, except for the blood streaming from its nostrils, ears, and rectum.

The recommended procedure in Iowa, as elsewhere, is not to disturb the carcass of an animal killed by anthrax. Veterinarians almost never perform an autopsy, because opening the beast's body would expose the bacteria to air, triggering the organism's self-preservation mechanism. *Bacillus anthracis* is a spore-forming bacterium, which is to say that, when faced with an environmental challenge, it forms a kind of shell, allowing it, acornlike, to lie dormant for years, even decades. When Professor Packer opened that 1928 vial of anthrax at Iowa State, the jellylike medium inside the tube had turned hard and crusty, but the anthrax spores inside were still alive. (Packer had put the anthrax in a fresh medium, sealed it back up, and left instructions for some future Iowa State microbiologist to try to revive it again in 2028.)

The stricken Iowa cow had probably contracted anthrax by consuming spores that had settled into the Iowa soil, perhaps after an anthrax outbreak in 1950-52, caused by feeding contaminated bonemeal to livestock. The spores from those afflicted animals had gone to ground, until they were ingested, probably with a clump of grass, by the cow in 1979. Once inside the warm, moist environment of the cow's digestive system, the spores came back to life, releasing their bacteria, which grow at phenomenal rates—each organism replicating itself every fifteen to twenty minutes. As the bacteria grew, they excreted a toxin that, in essence, caused the animal's immune system to go into hyperdrive, leading to shock and near-instant death.

The veterinarian would have disposed of the carcass immediately, either by burning it or, if it could be moved without rupture, by burying it after covering it with quicklime. In either case, before disposal, the vet salvaged a specimen from the diseased animal, either cutting off an ear and sealing it in a bag or drawing blood from the cow's jugular. The vet would have sent that specimen to the nearest state veterinary diagnostic center, which in this case was almost certainly the lab at Iowa State's College of Veterinary Medicine.

Iowa State microbiologists would have seen under the microscope big, rod-shaped bacteria that turned blue when introduced to an identifying substance called a Gram stain. Further biochemical tests would have proved positive for anthrax. At that point, a subculture would have been grown and sent down the street to the Department of Agriculture's National Veterinary Services Laboratory for confirmation. The original culture was probably put in a vial, which somehow found its way to the cabinet that held the Iowa State collection.

Here the story of the Ames strain leaves the realm of speculation, because what happened next is precisely known.

The National Veterinary Services Laboratory in Ames serves as the diagnostic center for the entire nation; it is a repository for all manner of germs and diseases that afflict American livestock. That is why the U.S. Army wrote to the N.V.S.L. in late 1980 requesting a sample of an anthrax culture. The Ames lab made a subculture of the anthrax and sent it to the Army's Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases—USAMRIID—at Fort Detrick, near Frederick, Maryland, along with the information that the isolate had come from a dead cow. The Army named it the Ames strain.

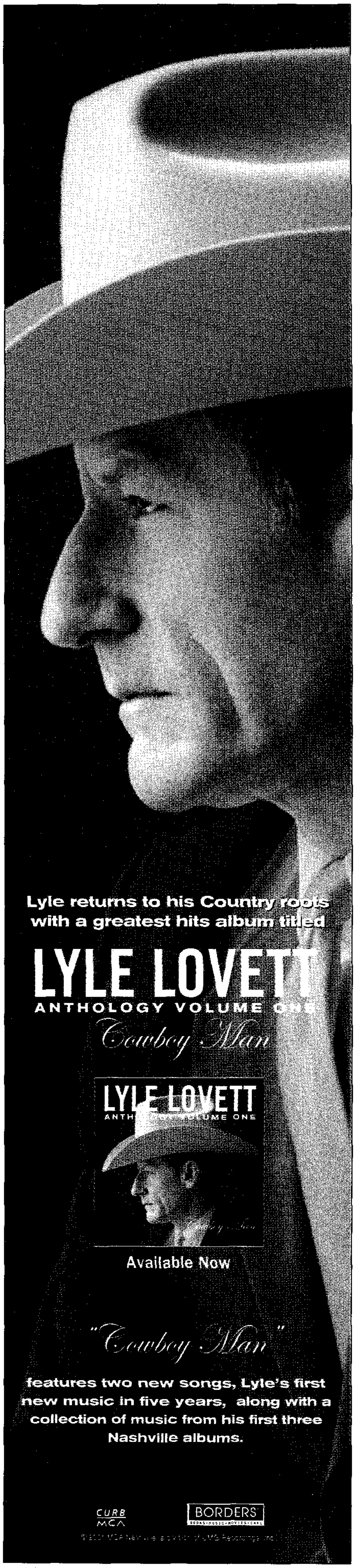
USAMRIID has long been familiar with anthrax, as far back as the days when it was the Army Medical Unit and was associated with the Biological Warfare Laboratories at Fort Detrick. The mighty lethality of anthrax has been appreciated by mankind since classical times, and its potential as a weapon has been intuited by warriors since 1876, when the bacteriologist Robert Koch discovered that the disease had a bacterial cause. During the First World War, German agents were injecting anthrax into American livestock. In the nineteen-thirties, Japan tested anthrax as a weapon in Manchuria. In the forties, the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union also took up the challenge of weaponizing anthrax.

But if anthrax is the perfect killer, silent and invisible, it is not, as it exists in nature, a perfect weapon. It is a livestock disease, and when humans contract it under normal conditions it is through contact with diseased animals or their hides. The commonest form of human infection (ninety-five per cent) is through skin contact—cutaneous anthrax. Lesions form, followed by a black scab, but, while potentially deadly, cutaneous anthrax is highly treatable by antibiotics. For people, by far the deadliest form of anthrax is that which is contracted by breathing spores into the lungs—inhalation anthrax. But, as the spores are not airborne under natural conditions, inhalation anthrax has been a rarity. According to the Center for Nonproliferation Studies, between 1900 and 1978 only eighteen cases of inhalation anthrax were reported in the United States, and two of those were contracted in a laboratory.

What happens to a human being who does develop inhalation anthrax, however, is what inspired bioweaponeers. Once someone has breathed anthrax spores deep into the lungs, symptoms soon appear that seem very much like those of the common flu. There is a fever, cough, and aches, at which point aggressive antibiotic treatment can still offer patients a fighting chance. Otherwise, the fever suddenly elevates, breathing becomes labored, and shock seizes the body. After the onset of this severe stage, it is almost always too late for a cure.

Broadly posed, the trick of weaponizing anthrax is to make it breathable. A clump of infected soil might contain billions of anthrax spores, but a clump of soil is unlikely to be inhaled. So the first task in weaponizing anthrax is to purify it, producing a concentration of spores. This is done by creating a suspension, in which the anthrax spores are separated from the material surrounding them in the sample—water, material from the growth medium, and so on. No particle of anything much bigger than five microns is likely to get past the mucous membranes and reach deep into the lungs, and each anthrax spore is itself less than two microns in size. Purifying and concentrating the spores requires real laboratory skill.

Purification and concentration, however, is not enough. In even the purest concentrate, anthrax spores, like most small particles, will clump together, owing to natural electrostatic force. "If you just grow up spores in a test tube and then you remove the liquid, you'll have a kind of a clump," says Philip S. Brachman, a legendary epidemiologist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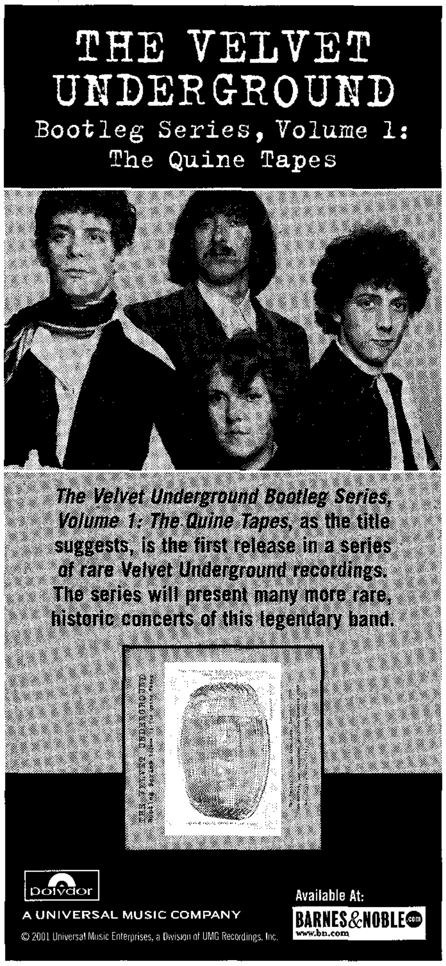
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and an old anthrax hand. "Now, that clump won't go anywhere—it'll fall to the ground." The next grand step in weaponizing anthrax is to cause those purified spores to separate, like individual sprinkles of a fine powder, so they can linger in the air and be inhaled.

Such anthrax becomes a weapon of unfathomable potency, but for years bioweapons scientists searched vainly for an efficient means by which to turn clumpy anthrax spores into airy, inhalable anthrax. Finally, in the early nineteen-sixties, a man named William C. (Bill) Patrick III, chief of product development for the American biowarfare program, found the answer. Patrick discovered that a certain combination of ingredients formed a handy anti-caking material, which, when combined with anthrax spores, allowed the spores to separate into a fine dry mist of unagglomerated poisons. "You want a free-flowing powder containing the agent that is electrostatic-free, so that it flows very nicely," Patrick explains calmly, as if he had developed a product to keep laundry static-free in a clothes dryer. "And when energy is applied to the powder, it breaks up into small particles."

A single gram of powdered anthrax can contain as many as a hundred billion anthrax spores. Conventional medical wisdom holds that inhalation of just eight to ten thousand spores is needed to trigger infection. The letter sent to Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle's office last month contained two grams of purified, powdery anthrax spores—potentially enough to kill twenty-five million people if it were efficiently distributed.

A letter sent through the mail is not a maximally efficient means of distribution, although, as government officials were surprised to discover, the automatic sorting machines at postal centers can, in jostling a tainted letter, cause a lot of human damage. Two postal workers at a mail-distribution center near Washington have died of inhalation anthrax. "When a person opens a letter, that represents the munition," Patrick says. "When letters go through that high-speed sorting-out process in the post office, you are talking about a huge amount of energy. And you really have a munition."

Patrick's process for making static-free anthrax spores was secretly patented by the government, but he switched over to defensive work when Richard Nixon announced, in 1969, that the nation would unilaterally end its biological-warfare programs. Two and a half years later, the United States—and ultimately some hundred and fifty other nations—became a signatory to the international Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. By most accounts, the United States actually did stop making these weapons, although the Soviet Union continued with a huge program of germ- and chemical-weapon development until at least 1992. Iraq, another signatory to the convention, admitted in 1995 to having produced two thousand gallons of liquid anthrax, and is believed to have an ongoing biowarfare program. Israel never signed the accord. Patrick says, "I think that the Israelis, if truth be known, have an extremely advanced program in biological warfare, because it's too good a weapons system to give up."

After the American program ended, the research on biological and chemical weaponry was taken up by the Army's Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases. The unit's chief purpose turned from making biological weapons to devising defenses against them, through such means as developing and testing vaccines.

It was an Army scientist, George Wright, who developed the human anthrax vaccine, which was field-tested in the nineteen-fifties by Philip Brachman. To test the vaccine, Brachman went to the one place in the country where human anthrax infection, including the inhalation form, was most likely to occur—the animal-hide-processing industry in New England. (Anthrax was once called woolsorter's disease.) Brachman recruited volunteers from four mills whose workers regularly contracted anthrax at a rate much higher than the average population—an annual rate of 1.2 infections for every hundred workers. He divided the volunteers into two groups, vaccinated one group, and administered a placebo to the other. The results proved the efficacy of the vaccine. That same formula is, in its essence, the vaccine now administered to the American armed forces and other people at risk, and the one that the government intends to make available to the broader public. (Before that can happen, the private firm in Lansing, Michigan, that holds the license on the formula must meet requirements imposed by the F.D.A.)

Over the years, the Army and civilian scientists at USAMRIID have tested new variations of the vaccine, and it was for just such a test that the Army requested a strain of anthrax from the Department of Agriculture lab in Ames in 1980. What they received was a subculture of the anthrax that had killed the cow in western Iowa the year before.

In working with their new isolate, the scientists discovered something remarkable about it: the Ames strain excreted an especially potent toxin. Ames became known as a "hot," or highly virulent, strain, and by the late nineteen-eighties it had become the gold standard for anthrax strains. "It's hot, so people like to challenge their animals with the Ames to determine how well their vaccine or their treatment modality is working," Patrick says.

The Ames strain's reputation among laboratory scientists created a demand for it, and the demand was handily met. Philip Brachman says that if he had wanted to get hold of an anthrax strain, he could have simply written to a laboratory that had it and they would have sent it to him. Germ banks around the world maintain and sell from collections of bacteria, and hundreds of university and research laboratories freely exchange strains of various organisms. There are some limitations, particularly in the United States. The 1996 Anti-Terrorism Act requires that anyone dealing in dangerous pathogens must show a legitimate scientific purpose and must register with the Centers for Disease Control. But the law does not prohibit possession of those dangerous pathogens by non-scientists. Nor are background checks, such as those required before the purchase of a handgun, conducted upon the hiring of technicians who have access to pathogens in laboratories.

In any event, restrictions can be avoided through private exchanges between scientists. With anthrax, there is plenty to share. "You streak it out on

"Goodbyes always make my throat hurt...I need more hellos..."
—Charlie Brown, 1967

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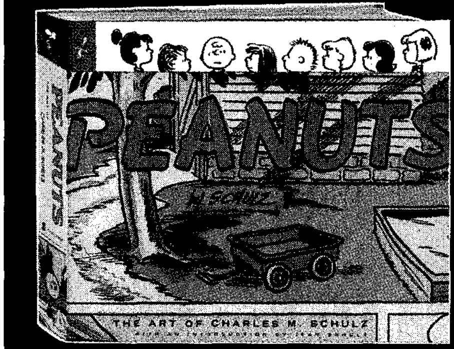
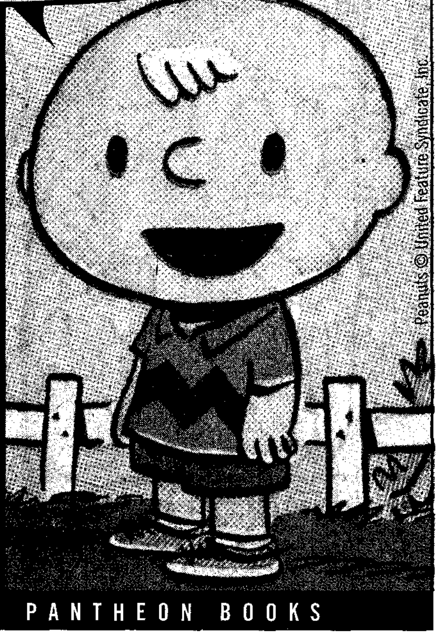
—Andrew Wyeth, in a letter to Charles Schulz, December 30, 1999

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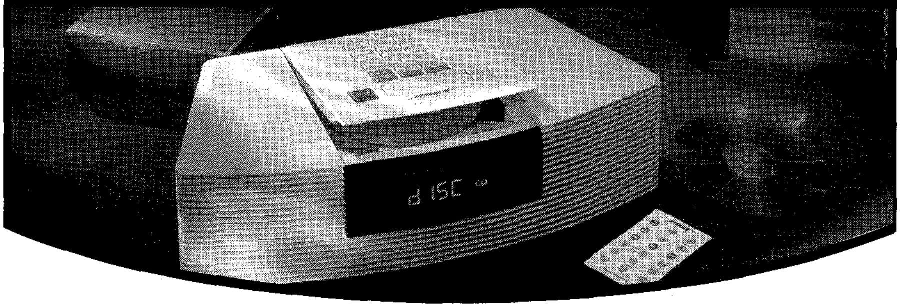

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"But, sweetheart, why do you have to marry a doctor? Why can't you marry a fireman?"

a petri dish until there's one individual live bacterium at a particular spot on the plate," Jim Roth explains. "You grow it overnight, one bacterium turns into millions."

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"It is an isolated case," Tommy Thompson, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, said after Bob Stevens died of anthrax on October 5th. "There is no terrorism." Such dissonance, which has characterized official pronouncements about the unfolding bioterrorism, is both alarming and, in a way, understandable. In recent weeks, even medical professionals have been made to realize how little they know about anthrax. The military establishment's research centers have been out of the bioweapons business for so long that they have had to rely partly on the advice of the last generation with real hands-on experience.

When anthrax outbreaks in New York, New Jersey, and Washington made it clear that the Florida occurrence was not an isolated case, it became imperative to determine the provenance of the bacteria that was being sent through the mail. A particular strain cannot be identified merely by peering at it through a microscope—all bacilli anthracis look more or less the same on a slide. To establish the genealogy of the poison-letter anthrax, the government turned to a young civilian scientist named Paul Keim, who is associated with Northern Arizona University, in Flagstaff, and whose wizardry in the field of DNA sequencing is fabled. It was Keim who determined that the unsuccessful anthrax attacks mounted by the Aum Shinrikyo cult in Tokyo in 1993 failed partly because the bacteria used by the terrorists was of the Sterne strain—an avirulent (nontoxic) bacteria that is used in an anthrax vaccine.

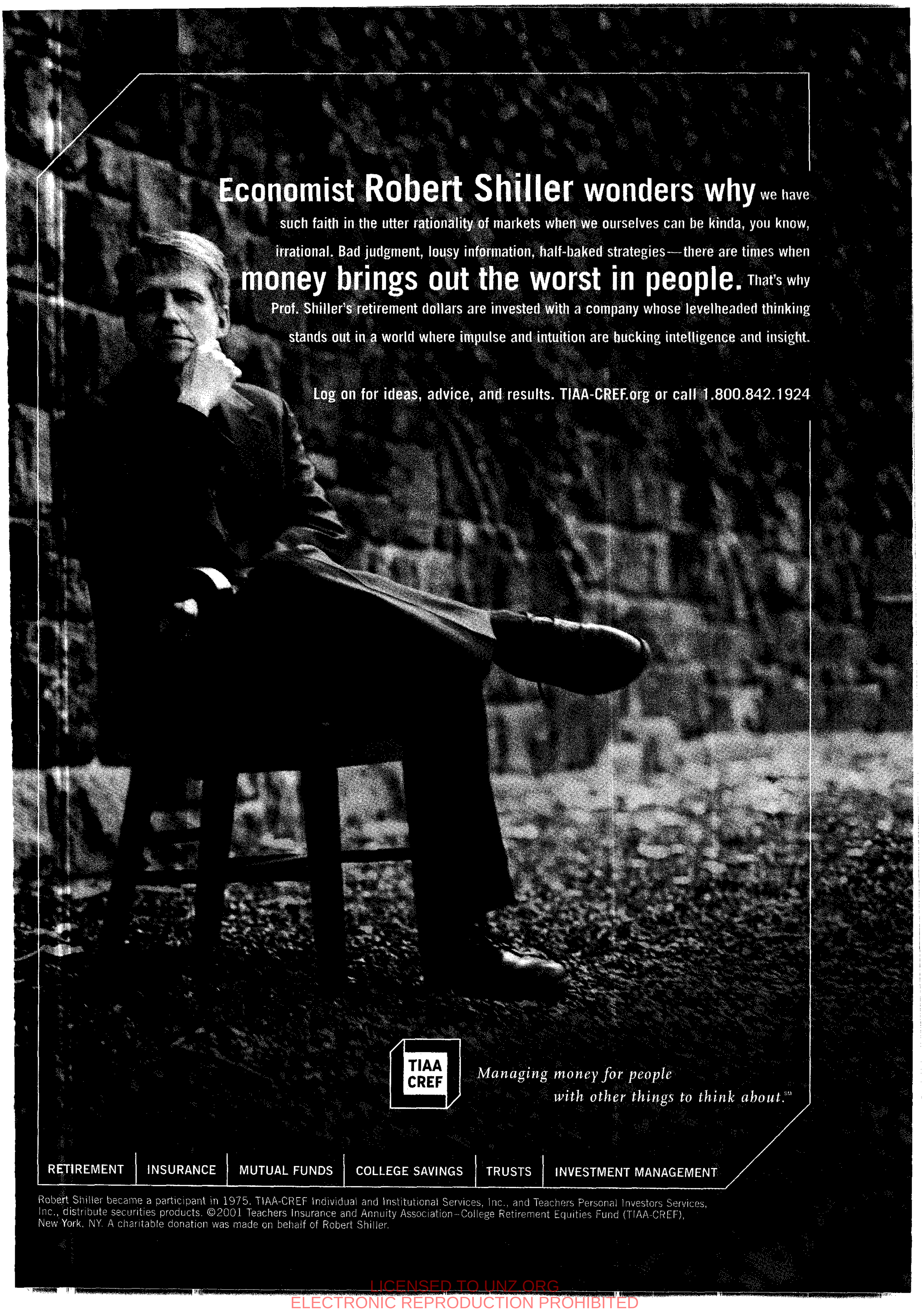
Keim has assisted American intelligence for some time, though he refuses to talk about it. He and an associate, Martin Hugh-Jones, a microbiologist at Louisiana State University, have compiled a formidable collection of pathogens. "It was set up way back when, 'To be ready for . . .' " Hugh-Jones says. "It went from 'Let's look at thirty samples' to 'Gosh, do you think we could get two hundred?' to now we have something like between twelve hundred and thirteen hundred."

Samples from the anthrax letters were sent to Keim at his laboratory in Flagstaff, where he put the bacteria through genetic-sequencing tests and compared them to known strains. Soon, he had a match: it was the Ames strain.

When Tom Ridge announced, on October 25th, that the strain had been identified, it seemed like a breakthrough. Officials now knew that they were dealing with a highly toxic strain. This, in turn, suggested something more ominous. "The fact that they have selected the Ames strain, a hot strain of anthrax, indicates to me that they know what the hell they are doing," Bill Patrick says.

But, in a way, identifying the anthrax only clouded the picture. Because of its popularity in laboratories, Ames had become a sort of stock strain, untraceable through its genetics alone to any particular source. "Being Ames doesn't tell me anything, except that somebody got ahold of a stock strain without any difficulty," Philip Brachman says.

There are other ways to trace the bacteria's source. The anthrax sent to Senator Daschle's office was weaponized—that is, it had been pulverized by the method that Bill Patrick pioneered almost forty years ago. (Twenty-eight of the forty people in the area where the letter was opened tested positive for anthrax exposure.) The fact that it was weaponized means that the powder



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contained not only anthrax spores but the anti-caking material that allows the spores to float free. Identifying that material—which has been described as a fine, brownish particulate—could help to pinpoint the source.

Early analyses suggested that Iraq could be the source of the anthrax. Bill Patrick says that when he was in Iraq as a member of the United Nations Special Commission charged with dismantling Iraq's weapons-of-mass-destruction programs, he saw batches of a substance called bentonite—a readily available material, brownish in color, that can be used to separate the anthrax spores into powdery particles. "It's not the material that we added to *our* weaponized agent, because we added a much better material," Patrick says. "But it will prevent, to a certain degree, sticking of the spores."

By last week, though, the head of the U.S. Army lab had ruled out bentonite as an ingredient in the anthrax letters. This seemed to rule out Iraq, even as the Czech government confirmed that the presumed lead hijacker in the September 11th attacks, Mohamed Atta, had met with an Iraqi spy in Prague last April.

In announcing the discovery that an anti-cling agent had been added to the anthrax sent through the mail, intelligence officials declared that only three nations in the world had the capacity to weaponize anthrax in that manner: the United States, the former Soviet Union, and Iraq. According to the Washington *Post*, an unnamed government official also said that "the totality of the evidence in hand suggests that it is unlikely that the spores were originally produced in the former Soviet Union or Iraq."

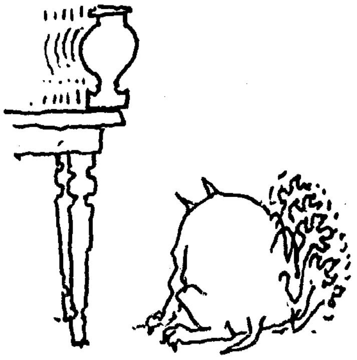
To Bill Patrick, the assertion that only three nations are capable of producing weaponized anthrax is laughable. "How in the hell he arrived at that conclusion I don't know," Patrick says. "I think the Iranians have a very advanced program in biological warfare. The Israelis . . . And we feel that China has an advanced program."

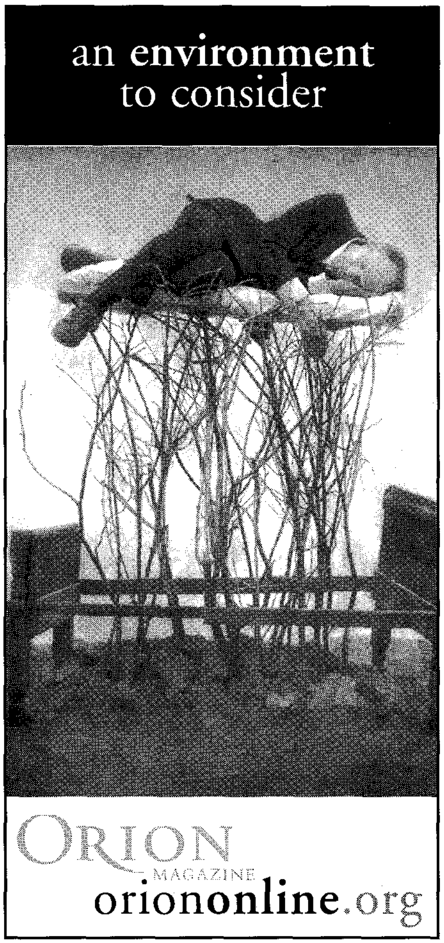
However, close parsing of the official's statement, an exercise that may be warranted just now, reveals that his pronouncement is literally true: the "spores" were not "originally produced" in the Soviet Union or Iraq; they were produced in the belly of a cow in western Iowa.

But the larger implication was somewhat puzzling. If the anthrax sent to Daschle came from one of three state-sponsored bioweapons programs, and if the former Soviet Union and Iraq are discounted as suspects, that leaves the biowarfare program of the United States, which officially ended its biological weapons program in 1969. At that time, government scientists destroyed their stores of weaponized anthrax, kept in Arkansas and Utah, by putting them through autoclaves, just as Iowa State killed its anthrax collection. Also, the Ames strain wasn't isolated until nearly a decade after the American program was supposed to have ended.

In a sense, Army scientists at USAMRIID have, in recent years, "weaponized" the Ames strain whenever they have tested anthrax vaccines on monkeys. They make an aerosol of the Ames strain, spray it into the monkeys' containment area, and await the results. But after each experiment, according to Caree Vander Linden, a USAMRIID spokeswoman, the aerosolized anthrax not inhaled by the monkeys is destroyed. "The aerosolized sample is contained within an airtight cabinet," she explained. "The air and the cabinet are decontaminated after the exposure to destroy all spores that were not inhaled. Any spores that are not inhaled are trapped by an all-glass impinger of water"—and destroyed.

The notion that only a state-sponsored biological-weapons program could produce the dangerous, powdery anthrax is one of the assumptions now being seriously challenged. The White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said last week





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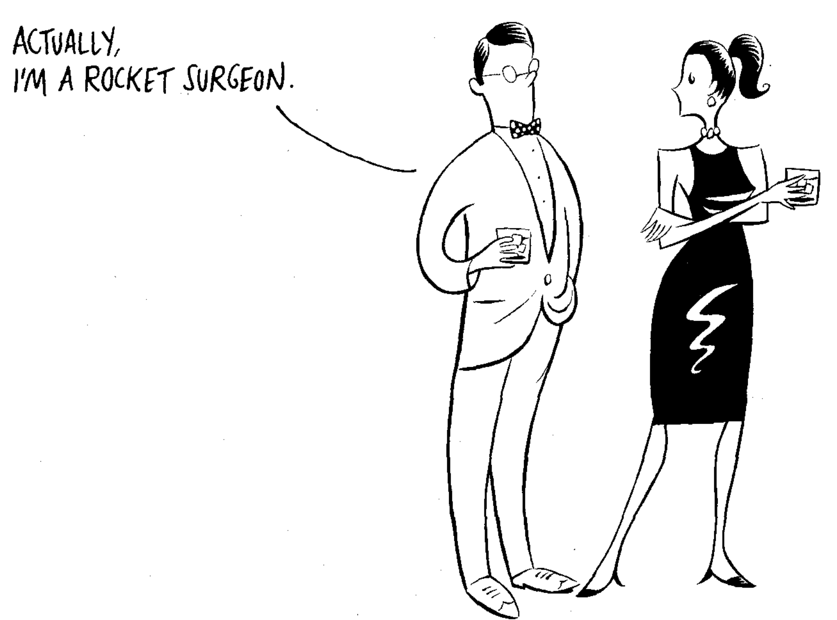
that the anthrax may have been produced by "a Ph.D. microbiologist" and that "it could be derived at a small, well-equipped microbiology lab"—the nutty-professor scenario. Fleischer may be right. The scientific know-how involved in weaponizing anthrax is formidable, but it is out there, and the technology is available. One of the steps in making a powdered, airy form of anthrax is freeze-drying the spores, along with the anti-caking material, in a lyophilizer, or freeze-drying machine. A new-model tabletop lyophilizer can be bought for less than eight thousand dollars.

"It's very easy to do on a lab scale," Patrick says. "Small production. We're talking about milligram quantities, as opposed to when you expand your process to get industrial-sized production."

It may be that Paul Keim can answer the state-sponsorship-or-lone-terrorist question through DNA sequencing, which might be capable of determining whether the anthrax was part of a small batch (the handgun scenario) or a vast store (the biological equivalent of a nuke).

One of the paradoxes of scientific inquiry in such circumstances, especially in the early stages, is that each answer only poses new questions. Paul Keim's DNA sequencing established that the terror anthrax is natively American—the Ames strain—but this knowledge seemed to widen the range of possible suspects rather than narrowing it, because Ames is now so common. Similarly, the discovery that an additive had been applied to anthrax spores would prove little, even if it had turned out to be bentonite, the material identified with the Iraqi program. Bentonite is a common substance with a wide range of uses, both in the laboratory and in household products, including cat litter.

At such a moment, even a man like Bill Patrick, who knows so much, really wishes he knew more. "Sometimes, I feel that a disgruntled professor who didn't get tenure is working at night in his little laboratory and producing this crud," Patrick says. "But I can't discount the possibility that it could be coming in by diplomatic pouch from a large supply. I can't answer it. I can't make up my mind. I really don't know." ♦



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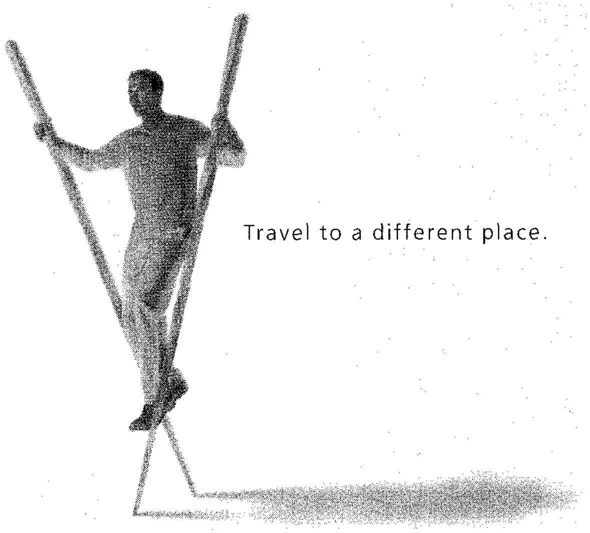
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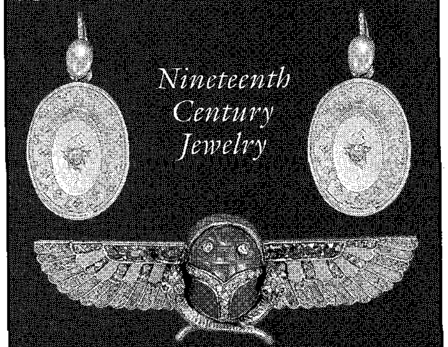

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PROFILES

AMERICAN DIVA

The world's most beautiful voice belongs to a nice girl from Rochester.

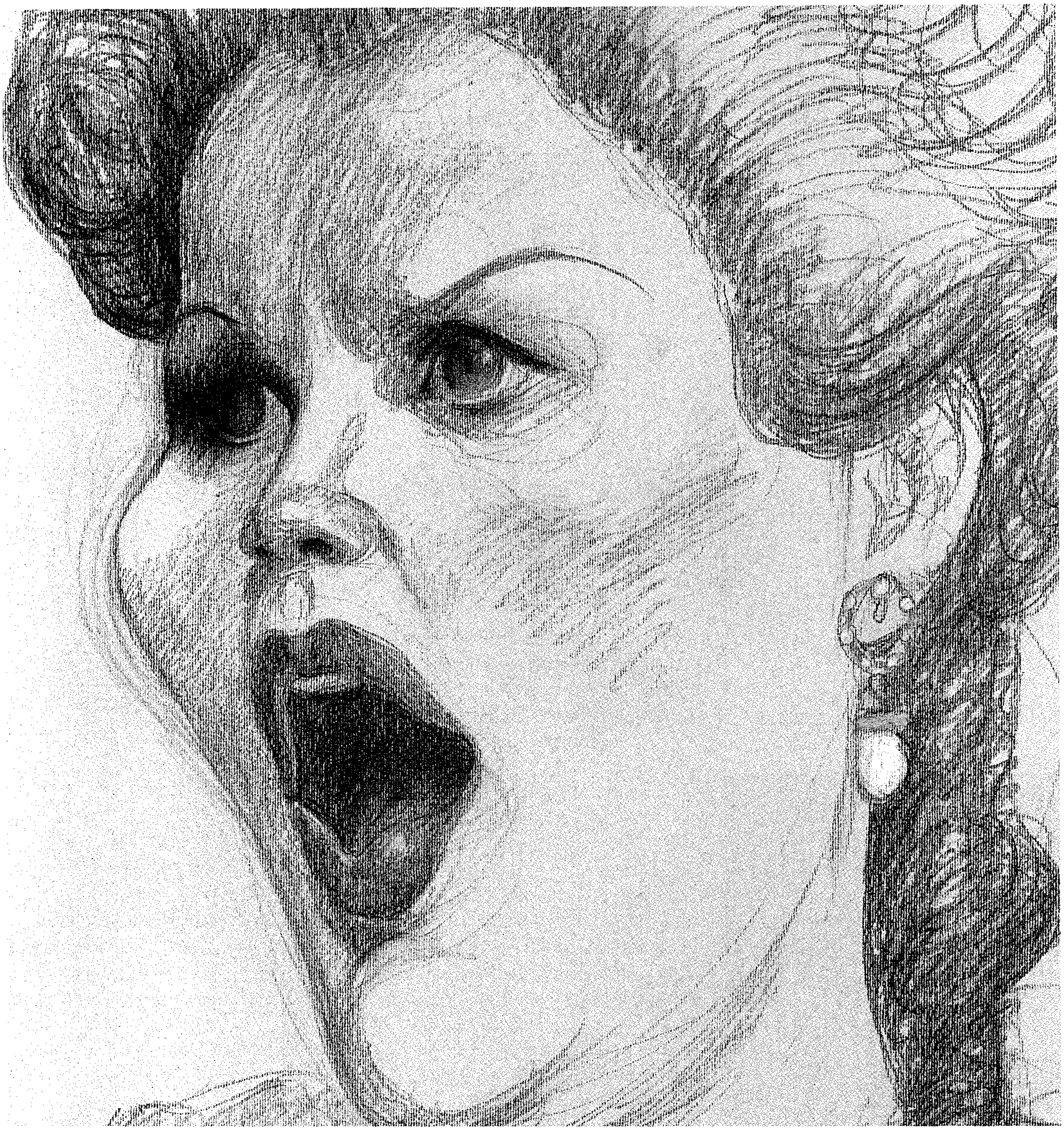
BY CHARLES MICHENER

Renée Fleming practiced singing "Amazing Grace" at least sixty times in front of her bathroom mirror the other week. She had been invited to perform the hymn at Ground Zero during the memorial service for families of victims of the World Trade Center attacks, and she was looking for a fresh approach. "It's been sung every way you can think of, from gospel style to jazz to operatic," she said. "And I thought, What on earth am I going to bring to it? I decided that, for this occasion, the simpler the better." She had also been asked to sing the unofficial new national anthem, "God Bless America," which was to close the program. "I bought ten recordings of it, from Celine Dion to Kate Smith," Fleming said. "They were not helpful."

The night before the memorial service, Fleming performed a recital of German, French, and Russian art songs with the pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet at Caramoor, in Westchester County—a demanding program that she will repeat at Carnegie Hall on November 17th. The evening was a gala benefit, held in what had once been a rich couple's mock-Moorish palazzo, and she wore a flaming-scarlet, low-cut Belle Époque gown, borrowed from a production of "Die Fledermaus." At the World Trade Center, where nearly ten thousand mourners and dignitaries filled four city blocks, she was dressed modestly in black, in a setting that looked like the apocalyptic last scene in Wagner's "Götterdämmerung." Acrid smoke rose out of the charred and twisted remains of a once towering Valhalla. Fleming's slow, understated delivery of "Amazing Grace," accompanied by the Orchestra of St. Luke's, conducted by Christoph Eschenbach, settled like a balm over the hushed crowd. She sang "God Bless America" in spacious breaths, without a trace of hokey jingoism, and when she ascended to the final "home" on an unaccompanied high B-flat—"I asked the orchestra to drop out for two beats," she said later, "just to make it a little more dramatic"—ten thousand pairs of eyes seemed to follow the note into the sky.

Fleming's voice is robust yet feminine, with a velvety sheen. It contains the two qualities—grandeur and pathos—that are essential for portraying the mostly pure-hearted but rejected heroines who form the core of her operatic repertory. The soprano voice conventionally falls, in ascending order of heft, into one of four categories: the light lyric, the lyric, the spinto, and the dramatic. More generally, sopranos can be divided into two types—the floaters and the thrusters. Fleming's voice is an unusually full lyric floater. It is at its most compelling in roles that have long, smooth phrases in the high register, supported by orchestral writing that does not compete with the voice's ability to send gleaming shafts of melody to the back of the hall. It is especially suited to the vaulting vocal lines and bittersweet orchestral colors of Mozart and Strauss.

Fleming is, physically, an old-fashioned beauty, with a heart-shaped face, large, expressive eyes, and a generous mouth. Whether she is appearing as herself in recitals or as one of her more regal operatic characters, she establishes an intimacy with the audience that cannot be learned or faked. Spilling secrets is what opera heroines routinely do, and yet only the greatest singers can convey the feeling that they are also spilling something important about themselves. Jenny Lind, the nineteenth-century "Swedish Nightingale," whom P. T. Barnum promoted into an American craze, is said to have conveyed a sense of inner saintliness. With Maria Callas, it was self-punishment in the service of art. With Fleming, one is in



Renée Fleming's musical stature and celebrity reflect the dominance of American singers in the international opera world.

EDWARD SOREL

the company of a woman who has a reassuring, translucent integrity.

Fleming often wears dresses made for her by Gianfranco Ferré—clothes with a high-style opulence that matches the dimensions of her voice. But, the Ferrés notwithstanding, she is without pretension. Several days before her Caramoor recital, she gave a public interview in Weill Recital Hall. "I don't naturally have a performer's temperament," she said during a discussion of how she became an opera star. "It wasn't easy. For me, doing the performance has been a necessary evil." As for her private life (she is a divorced single mother of two young daughters), she said, jokingly: "In the last two years, I've kissed Susan Graham"—the mezzo-soprano who often plays Octavian to her Marschallin in "Der Rosenkavalier"—"more than anyone else."

Christopher Roberts, the head of Universal Classics, with whom Fleming has an exclusive recording contract on the Decca label, claims that she is the "biggest-selling soprano in the world." And, in fact, among today's female singers her record sales are eclipsed only by those of the mezzo-soprano Cecilia Bartoli. But critics yearning for another prima donna like Callas, who resuscitated forgotten bel-canto works and took career-shortening vocal risks, complain that Fleming is too cautious. They say that she doesn't assume new roles readily, and they also note that her competition is not particularly strong. This is not an age of

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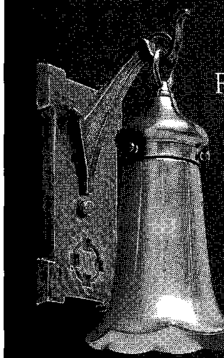

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THE EXPULSION

Adam was happy—now he had someone to blame
for everything—shipwrecks, Troy,
the gray face in the mirror.

Eve was happy: now he would always need her.
She walked on boldly, swaying her beautiful hips.

The serpent admired his emerald coat,
the Angel burst into flames
(he'd never approved of them, and he was right).

Even God was secretly pleased: Let
History Begin!

The dog had no regrets, trotting by Adam's side
self-importantly, glad to be rid

of the lion, the toad, the basilisk, the white-footed mouse,
who were also happy and forgot their names immediately.

Only the Tree of Knowledge stood forlorn,
its small hard bitter crab apples

glinting high up, in a twilight of black leaves:
how pleasant it had been, how unexpected

to have been, however briefly,
the center of attention.

—*Katha Pollitt*

superstars. No tenor has emerged to succeed Luciano Pavarotti and Plácido Domingo; nor is there a soprano around who has the commanding presence of the members of the postwar pantheon: Callas, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Renata Tebaldi, Leontyne Price, Birgit Nilsson, Montserrat Caballé, Joan Sutherland. Although the mezzo category is unusually rich—with the likes of Bartoli, Graham, Olga Borodina, Vesselina Kasarova, Jennifer Larmore, and Lorraine Hunt Lieberson—Fleming's generation of sopranos includes only two singers of similar clout: Karita Mattila and Deborah Voigt. And no one but Fleming seems to be on his or her way to what might be called Pavarotti Land, that place beyond the opera hall where, every couple of decades or so, a classical singer is accorded something like the celebrity of a pop star.

Fleming is keenly responsive to the demands of celebrity-building. Susan Graham, who is her good friend as well as her frequent co-star, told me that, during intermissions, while Graham was likely to be playing cards with the boys, Fleming would be holed up in her dressing room, answering fan mail. (Her secretary has lately taken on the chore, subject to her meticulous approval.) Last year, she promoted her album "Renée Fleming," a collection of syrupy arias whose cover showed her in a provocative pose—the photograph appeared later in a Rolex ad—with a commercial that could have been designed for MTV. She put in a twelve-hour day filming it in an abandoned Brooklyn shipyard, pretending to sing Cio-Cio-San's "Un bel dì" to her own recorded voice, while a hundred butterflies fluttered from her mouth. She also, in one thirty-six-hour period, flew from New York to Vienna and back again to shoot a two-minute scene in

"Bride of the Wind," an earnestly silly film about the many marriages of Alma Mahler, in which Fleming sang two of the heroine's not quite imperishable songs.

Fleming's ascendance marks, in many ways, the triumph of the American opera singer in a culture that, historically, has been skeptical of Yankee aspirations. In 1825, New Yorkers had their first exposure to grand opera, thanks to the arrival of a troupe led by an aging Spanish tenor named Manuel del Pópolo Vicente Rodríguez García and his sensational daughter María-Felicia (later renowned as the diva Maria Malibran). Since then, the number of American singers who have achieved major international careers is, surprisingly, small.

If Callas can be claimed as an American because she was born in New York and lived there until she was thirteen, then America produced the greatest international diva of them all. But it is truer to say that Callas, with her Greek temperament, her Spanish tutelage, her Italian triumphs and tribulations, and her mastery of all styles, belonged everywhere. During and after the Second World War, an impressive array of American female singers emerged who were the equals of their European peers—among them Eleanor Steber, Dorothy Kirsten, Eileen Farrell, Leontyne Price, Marilyn Horne, Beverly Sills, and Frederica von Stade. But only Price, Horne, and von Stade achieved international prestige on a par with their American reputations. Significantly, the African-American prima donnas who developed major careers after Price—Grace Bumbry, Martina Arroyo, Shirley Verrett, Jessye Norman, and Kathleen Battle—received as much acclaim abroad as they did at home.

Today, most of the leading American opera singers are mainstays on the European scene, which is dominated not by stars but by directors eager to impose their personal visions on traditional repertoire. In this climate, American singers are often valued above their European counterparts for their versatility with languages and their readiness to submit to outlandish staging demands. In recent years, they have become so dominant at the Salzburg Festival that many of them call opera's grandest annual reunion "summer camp."

Fleming is one of the campers. Two summers ago in Salzburg, where she was making her stage début as Donna Anna in "Don Giovanni," she dropped by the Triangel Café one evening for a nightcap with a half dozen American singers who had just finished performing in the Festspielhaus, next door. Fuelled by a continuous flow of beer, the chatter ranged from shopping tips and career gripes to a horror story about a German director who had, allegedly, called Karita Mattila a "fat cow" when she objected to performing with two more or less naked men on dog leashes

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who had been brought out to lend a little S. & M. to "Così Fan Tutte."

Toward midnight, as Fleming and Susan Graham were reminiscing about their many performances of "Der Rosenkavalier," Graham began to mock what she called Fleming's efforts to give the Marschallin the distinctive, silvery sound of the part's most celebrated postwar interpreter, Schwarzkopf. After Graham was applauded, Fleming did an even more egregiously Schwarzkopfian imitation of herself, sending hooty A-flats into the deserted platz.

The next day, beside a hotel pool where Fleming's two daughters, Amelia, who is now nine, and Sage, who is six, were demonstrating their swimming skills, she talked to me about her own childhood. "Music was an important part of my life from the very beginning," she said. She was born in 1959 in Indiana, Pennsylvania, a small town near Pittsburgh. Her parents were trained singers, but their ambitions never took them beyond leading roles in community opera and musical theatre. Her father, Edwin, was a music teacher and a choir director in the local high school and church. Her mother, Patricia, was also a high-school choir director and a vocal teacher. Fleming says that they had a "passionate household." Her parents, she said, were focussed on their three children, of whom she was the eldest. Her mother saw to it that, even as an infant, she participated in local musical and theatrical events. "While I was giving voice and piano lessons at home," Fleming's mother told me later, "Renée would sit very quietly on a daybed and listen. She took in everything." When Renée was fifteen, the family moved to Churchville, New York, a small farming community near Rochester.

"I was a dreamer," Fleming said. "I did whatever I had to do to get A's, and then I was off into my own world. My passion was horses. I read all the 'Black Stallion' books, and, as a teen-ager, I had a palomino named Heather, with whom I did a lot of showing." At one point, there were seven horses on the family's five-acre property, and the children were responsible for their care. "Every morning before school, we would take buckets of ice from the barn and carry them to the house, thaw them out under hot water, and carry them back to the barn for the horses to drink from," Fleming recalled. "I was a brute—I could carry a hundred-pound bag of oats!"

Starting at the age of ten, Fleming sang in her father's choir—not only the standard Protestant hymns but also more challenging works by Bach, Mozart, and Britten. "My parents say that they could always pick out my voice from the others, but I didn't try to stand out," she said. "My nickname was Stone Face—I was terribly shy." In her senior

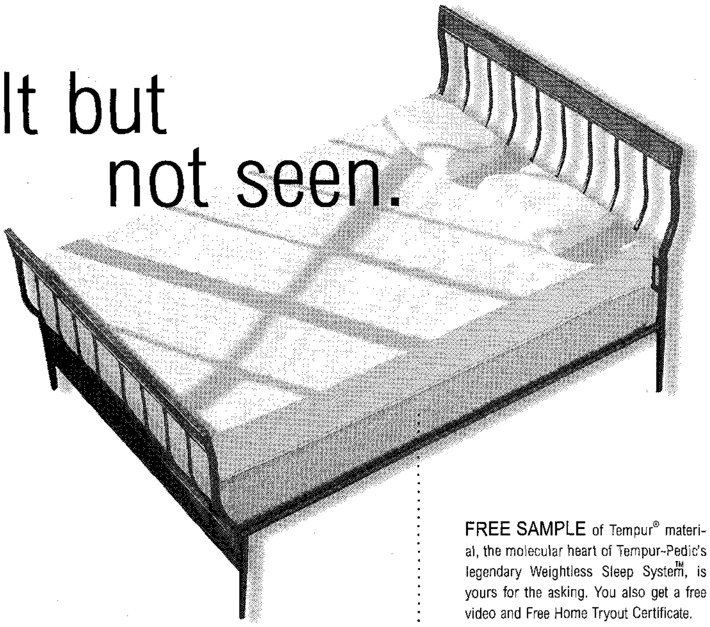
"You haven't moved all day."

year, she was elected prom queen. "I was just the candidate who wasn't hated by somebody," she said, self-effacingly. "I made my own dress, and when my date came to pick me up I was still hemming it."

Despite her shyness, Fleming had leading parts in school musicals, beginning with Eliza Doolittle, in "My Fair Lady," when she was twelve. She was always thoroughly prepared. "My mother would come into my bedroom and say, 'No, no, no, no. We're going to do this and this,' and line by line we would go through the show." But she had no expectations of becoming a professional singer. "In retrospect, the best piece of advice I got was when I was sixteen and I sang for Jan de Gaetani"—the American mezzo-soprano. "She said, 'Keep the naturalness in your voice, and just wait.' But by the time I left high school, I had already developed vocal problems from trying to sing like an adult. I couldn't sing softly, and I couldn't hit high notes without a lot of physical tension."

Fleming was a Joni Mitchell fan when she was a teen-ager. "Joni's the one singer whose new albums I still rush out to buy," she said. "She's the one I put on whenever I feel overwhelmed." At the State University of New York in Potsdam, where Fleming majored in music education, she developed a passion for the most operatic of jazz singers, Sarah Vaughan, and sang jazz at a local pub called Alger's. Years later, when she performed the title role in Handel's "Alcina" at the Paris Opera, the conductor William Christie remarked on how well her scat-developed technique had equipped her for Baroque pyrotechnics.

While Fleming was in a graduate program at the Eastman School of Music, she had a crisis of confidence. "I'd done some wonderful things—a fantastic 'Turn of the Screw,' a Zerlina in a great 'Don Giovanni'—and I could sing pretty well up to an A," she said. "But then I began having a lot of trouble performing. I was so much the good girl that I didn't know what I wanted to have for lunch. I only knew what I *should* have for lunch. Socially, I was very insecure. I had to get over it, so I made myself call people up. I literally pushed myself through the fear. 'Pushing myself



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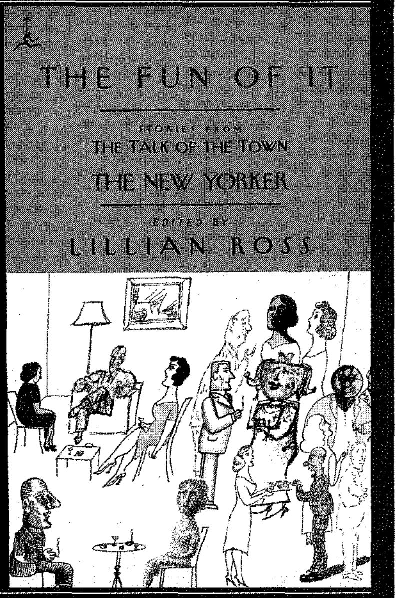

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through the fear' could be the motto for my whole life."

Fleming is often compared to the late Eleanor Steber, the great Mozart and Strauss specialist at the Metropolitan Opera in the nineteen-forties and fifties. Unlike Steber, who was already a commanding artist in her early twenties but whose later career was damaged by alcoholism, Fleming didn't begin to outgrow her insecurities as a performer until she was in her thirties. When she sang Pamina's aria "Ach, ich fühl's," from "The Magic Flute," at the Met's national auditions in 1983, her nervousness was visible. "All I wanted to do was crawl under the piano," she recalled. "Afterward everyone just looked at me with faces that said, 'Poor thing.'"

When Fleming was twenty-four, she came to New York to enter the opera workshop at Juilliard. She lived in Washington Heights with a roommate and an English setter and did clerical work at a midtown law firm. During two summers, she studied with Jan de Gaetani at the Aspen Music School. De Gaetani, who died in 1989, was at home in everything from Schubert and Webern to Cole Porter, and she became a model of stylistic integrity and versatility for a generation of American singers, including Dawn Upshaw and Lucy Shelton. "What Jan taught me was the depth of analysis with which one must approach a new piece, both in terms of the text and the range of musical colors," Fleming said. "She couldn't talk about what it meant to become a real musician without bursting into tears. We'd think, Oh dear, here she goes again, but it was inspiring."

At Juilliard, Fleming met Beverley Johnson, a voice teacher who became her greatest mentor. "Beverley provided me with the missing pieces of the puzzle, without which I wouldn't be here," she said. "She was the technician. For me, getting the high notes was about learning technique. There are lots of aspects to it—breath control, breath support, breath capacity, and how they must all coördinate. Then, there's the resonance issue. Where do you place the sound? In the chest? In the facial mask? In the mouth? Or in a combination of all those places? In Lincoln, Nebraska, in 1990, Beverley had me sing my first Verdi 'Requiem' with a mirror taped to the score to make sure that I would open the back of my throat for the high C's."

Midway through her Juilliard program, Fleming was awarded a Fulbright grant to study in Germany. In Frankfurt, she became fluent in German, and took lessons with the distinguished American soprano Arleen Auger. She also studied briefly with Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, who accepted her for an intensive week of master classes. "I was a huge Schwarzkopf fan," Fleming said. "The way she could control and color that pure, hooded sound was so magical. If she'd asked me to stand on my head for a week, I'd have done it. But she could be cruel. One day I was the golden girl, the next day I couldn't do anything right. By the end of a lesson, I was so emotionally exhausted that all I could do was go back to where I was staying and sit at the table and cry. Still, Schwarzkopf taught me something very important. She said, 'It's your responsibility to make a beautiful sound.' Until then, I'd believed that my only responsibility was to make a healthy sound. There's a huge distinction. To make a beautiful sound means that you color the voice in such a way as to create the most pleasing sound."

According to Beverley Johnson, the Schwarzkopf experience was a disaster. She spoke to me about this just a few months before she died, earlier this year, at the age of ninety-six. "Schwarzkopf thought that Renée's voice was too free, too open," she said. "She wanted everything pulled back. Renée was trying to become something she wasn't, which is a sure way to ruin your singing. It was as though she'd taken a knife and cut off the top of her voice. It took me two years of work to get it back."

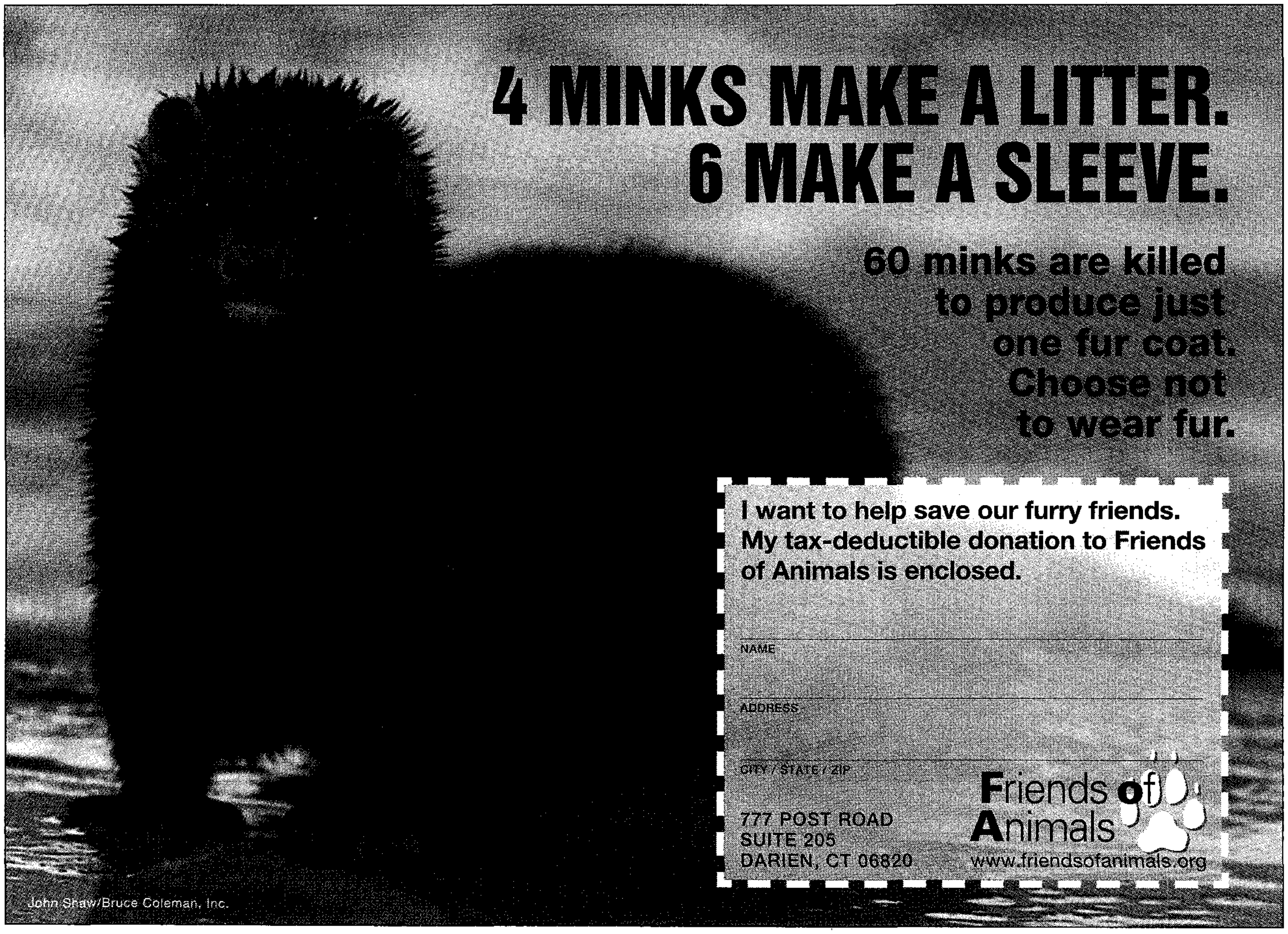
In the fall of 1988, Fleming sang the Countess in "Le Nozze di Figaro" at the Houston Grand Opera, filling in for a soprano who had withdrawn from the production. The Countess is one of the most vocally exposed roles in the Mozart repertoire—"Dove sono" still gives Fleming "nightmares"—and she worked intensively on the part with Christoph Eschenbach, with whom she has formed a lasting partnership. (He is the conductor on her resplendent recordings of Strauss's "Four Last Songs" and "Strauss Heroines," and he will conduct her performances of Strauss's "Arabella" at the Met, which opens on November 26th.) Eschenbach remembers being "completely impressed" with the twenty-nine-year-old Countess. "Renée was so receptive to everything that was asked of her," he said. "She listens to all the advice, then takes it home and sleeps on it. By the following day, she has kind of inhaled the role into her personality." The next spring, Fleming finally won the Met auditions—it was her third try—and in 1990 she won the prestigious Richard Tucker Award. She sang one of Callas's bel-canto spellbinders, the final scene of Bellini's "Il Pirata," a rarely performed opera that the Met is producing for her in the fall of 2002.

In 1989, Fleming married an aspiring young actor, Rick Ross, whom she had met at Juilliard, where he worked in the stage department. That summer, she made her début at the New York City Opera, as Mimi in "La Bohème." Her Met début came two years later. "I was covering the Countess for Felicity Lott, and I got a call at ten in the morning that I had to step in for her that evening," she said. "I can still remember jumping up and down and screaming like a maniac. And then suddenly thinking, Oh, my God, this is it!"

Matthew Epstein, who was Fleming's manager for five years and is now the artistic director of the Lyric Opera of Chicago, says that Fleming had a dangerous tendency to take on too much too soon. "In one year in the early nineties, she learned something like six new roles in five languages, from Mozart to Dvořák," he recalls. "I told her she'd never make it if she kept that up. Renée is a musician with extraordinary drive. She's got what they say Tebaldi had—'dimples of iron.' But she really had to decide what gave her the most artistic satisfaction and stick with that. The keys to greatness in this business are repetition and depth. Renée is someone who has to live with a role. Now, every time she sings her Manon, her Arabella, or her Desdemona, it gets deeper."

In September, Fleming opened the Lyric's season, in Verdi's "Otello," and presented her most complex Desdemona to date. Desdemona is often played as a girlish pawn, but Fleming's character was a full-blooded woman. In the production's most arresting moment, she was hurled to the stage by Otello, the towering Ben Heppner. When he pulled up her skirts, she fended him off with a series of kicks, then got to her feet and fled the stage—all without sacrificing an ounce of vocal power. Fleming laughed about this afterward. "I knew it was going to be a challenge when I arrived for rehearsals, and Peter Hall"—the director—"introduced me to someone he called 'the fight coördinator.' "

Last winter, Fleming spent the better part of a week putting in long days at the Hit Factory, on West Fifty-fourth Street, where she was recording her eighth solo album, "Night Songs," a collection of twenty-six nocturnal musings



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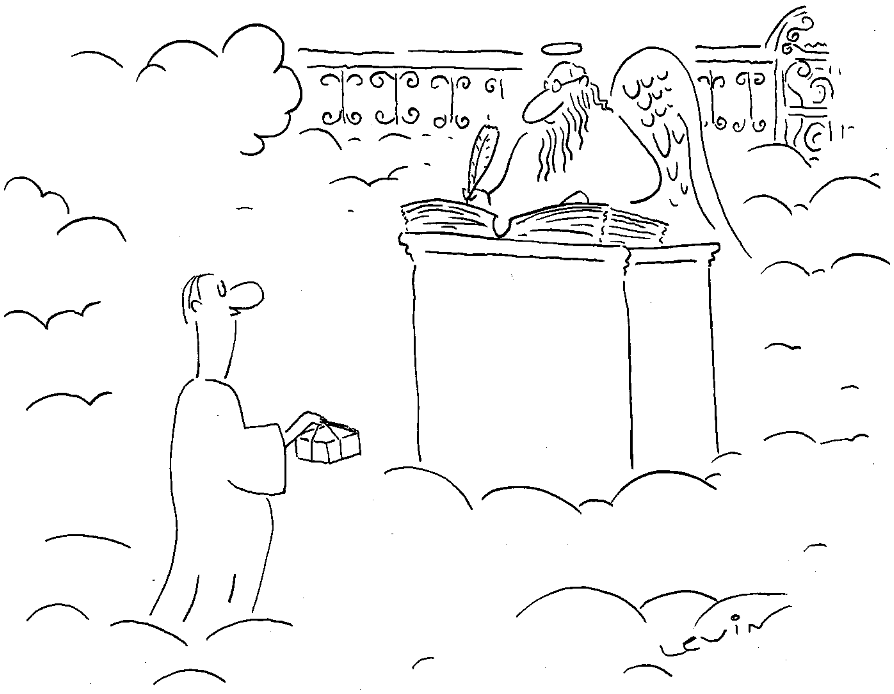


in French, German, and Russian, by Fauré, Debussy, Joseph Marx, Strauss, and Rachmaninoff. She and the pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet were joined in the studio by a producer, a sound engineer, and three language coaches, one for each of the nationalities represented in the songs. Fleming had chosen the coaches herself, so that, as she put it, "none of my Americanisms would slip in."

An untrained ear could have heard nothing but assurance as Fleming rendered Fauré's "Mandoline," a jauntily tricky song with a Verlaine text. But Thomas Grubb, a French voice and diction coach at Juilliard, was listening microscopically.

"Remember to sing 'chawteuses,' not 'chahteuses,'" he said after Fleming had sung the first verse.

Dutifully, she adjusted the Pennsylvania "a."

Grubb went on, "There's not enough 'oo' in 'euses.'"

The "oo" from upstate New York became emphatic.

The vowel-fraught line "*et leurs molles ombres bleues*" brought Fleming into the control room. Like a beginning French student, she spoke it over and over again until Grubb was satisfied.

The rewards of this scrupulousness are obvious in the finished recording, which is the most impressive song collection that Fleming has produced. If the voice sometimes sounds a shade too creamy for the shifts of color and rhythm in the French songs, she and Thibaudet make a persuasive case for the little-known songs of Marx, an Austrian master of Impressionist tone painting. The more emotionally unleashed songs of Strauss and Rachmaninoff bring out all of Fleming's declarative powers. In Rachmaninoff's closing "Oh, do not sing to me," she delivers a high A that seems to twist so delicately in the air that it would surely have brought Beverley Johnson—to whose memory the album is dedicated—to her feet.

The Donna Anna in Salzburg was one of the biggest challenges of Fleming's career. She had successfully recorded a "Don Giovanni" under the direction of Sir Georg Solti in 1996, but singing Donna Anna on a concert stage and singing the role in opera's most prestigious fishbowl are not the same thing. Moreover, she was appearing in a production that had been critically panned the previous summer, and she was following the highly acclaimed Donna Anna of Karita Mattila.

"It's not clear what Mozart and da Ponte"—the librettist—"actually felt about the characters in 'Don Giovanni,'" she said, "so we have to imagine them as contemporary people. For me, Donna Anna is a modern woman who is deeply attached to her father, since there's no mother in the picture. She's a good girl. Then, suddenly, the Don seduces her, and she experiences a new world of sexuality. And then, three minutes later, her father's dead. For the rest of the opera, she's in a kind of emotional daze."

When Fleming takes on a new part, she studies as many historic recordings as she can find, listening for stylistic touches that were powerful at the time but have since gone out of favor. She describes her way of growing into a role as a "layering process—each time you do it, you bring out more of the character's depths." For Donna Anna, she was particularly drawn to Eleanor Steber.

Before Fleming's career took off, in the early nineteen-nineties, she attended a seminar on the psychology of nervousness. But she still gets anxious before performances. "I can make myself really miserable," she said. "For weeks before the opening night of 'Don Giovanni,' I had incredible tension in my neck and shoulders. I called Beverley, who gave me loving support. I've decided that it's some sort of penance that I have to go through—that only if I suffer enough before the performance will I be allowed to be comfortable onstage. Of course, in opera you're portraying people who are generally in a high state of tension. My biggest struggle has been to learn how to show that tension without feeling it myself."

The Salzburg "Don Giovanni" production had updated seventeenth-century Seville to a murky Fascist setting, and Fleming, in a blond wig and a blue chiffon dress, looked like the seduced-and-abandoned heroine of an early neo-realist film. The Don was Ferruccio Furlanetto, a veteran Italian baritone of great assurance, and as they wrestled with each other in the first act, when he is attempting to flee the scene of his sexual assault on Donna Anna, her emotional ambivalence was palpable. In the past, Fleming sometimes seemed to rely on vocal prowess at the expense of physical expressiveness. On occasion, she has sacrificed incisiveness of pronunciation for a seamless sound. But at Salzburg, as she went from sorrow to fury, and from confusion to determination, everything was of a piece—body, eyes, language, voice. Encouraged by the least Mozartean of conductors, Valery Gergiev, she sang with great freedom, indulging in an almost reckless line-bending use of rubato that recalled the rhapsodic dizziness of her old idol Sarah Vaughan. And there was a new, guttural quality in her middle register that suggested Callas's ability to turn an ugly sound into a dramatically beautiful one.

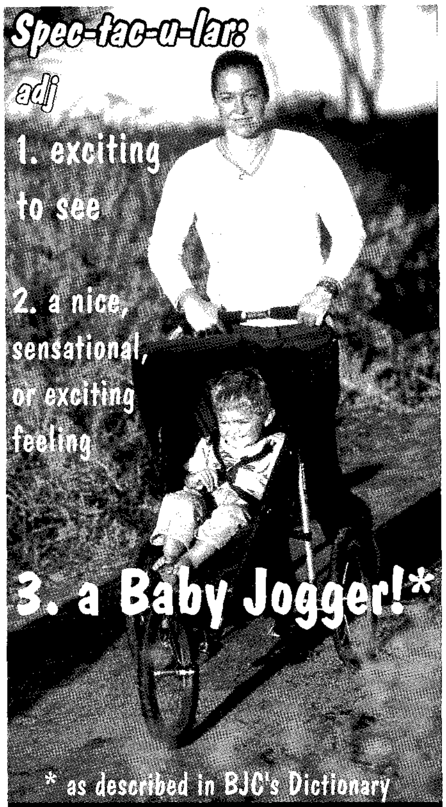
Fleming's triumphant Donna Anna came after a difficult personal period. In 1998, her marriage began to come apart, in part because of the disparity between her career and her husband's ambitions as an actor. Rick Ross, like Fleming, grew up in small-town Pennsylvania. A handsome, athletically built man, he describes himself as "very low-key and simple, someone who believes in family dinners." As Fleming's husband, he did many of the domestic chores. "Even after we had our kids," Ross told me, "Renée didn't slow down professionally. Her career took precedence over everything. I had this very romantic idea of myself as her supporter, and I loved taking care of the kids. But I was becoming resentful. As time went on, Renée, understandably, got tired of it." Last year, the couple were amicably divorced. Today, Ross sees his daughters frequently—when their mother is out of town, he has supper with them in her gracious, nineteenth-century house in suburban Connecticut.

Fleming's marital problems coincided with professional ones. In the summer of 1998, she was loudly booed for the first time in her career. She was singing the title role in Donizetti's "Lucrezia Borgia" at La Scala. "I have no idea what caused it," she said. "Perhaps it was the feeling that I wasn't Caballé or Callas. In any event, it was a nightmare. It's frightening to realize that audiences can attack you that way." Fleming later repeated the role, with Eve Queler's Opera Orchestra of New York—this time to cheers.

From La Scala, she went to San Francisco for the world première of André Previn's adaptation of "A Streetcar Named Desire." Although the opera had a mixed critical reception, she was thoroughly convincing as Blanche DuBois, using feathery pianissimos to bring out the character's seductive fragility and finding a disturbing balance between Blanche's emotional vacancy and her neediness. The role requires Fleming to be onstage for nearly three hours, and, despite its demands, she looks forward to doing it again. "There's a terrible part of me that says that I have to do everything today because there will be no tomorrow," Fleming said. But she cancelled what was her most eagerly awaited new role at the Met—Violetta, in a new Franco Zeffirelli production of "La Traviata." "When I heard that Roberto Alagna and Angela Gheorghiu had dropped out of the production, I called Joe Volpe"—the general manager of the Met—"and said, 'Please consider me for it.' " A few months before the scheduled performance, she reconsidered, saying that she hadn't had enough time to give fresh thinking to a role that has had so many celebrated interpreters in the past.

"By 1996, Fleming had become the new darling of the day . . . a New Age diva poised to enter the twenty-first century doing only the most predictable things, whatever the system required," the critic Peter G. Davis wrote in "The American Opera Singer," an authoritative account of notable careers from 1825 to the present day. "While hoping for Fleming to surprise the musical world and prove herself an artist of spirit and imagination who made her own rules, opera fans held their breath." Five years later, the judgment seems harsh. Fleming knows how the protean Callas, for example, shortened her career by taking on too many stylistically different challenges, and she is devoting more of her time to recitals than to opera. Her principal new roles will be Imogene in "Il Pirata," which she has performed once before, in a concert version, in 1989; Violetta, which she is scheduled to sing in 2003, at the Houston Grand Opera; and, down the road, Madeleine in Strauss's "Capriccio," at the Paris Opéra. It is a strategy that seems inspired not so much by a lack of imagination as by the desire to husband—and expand—her resources, so that she will still be singing beautifully when she is well into her sixties.

But Davis raised a question that con-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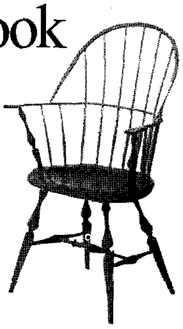

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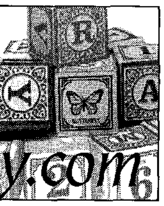

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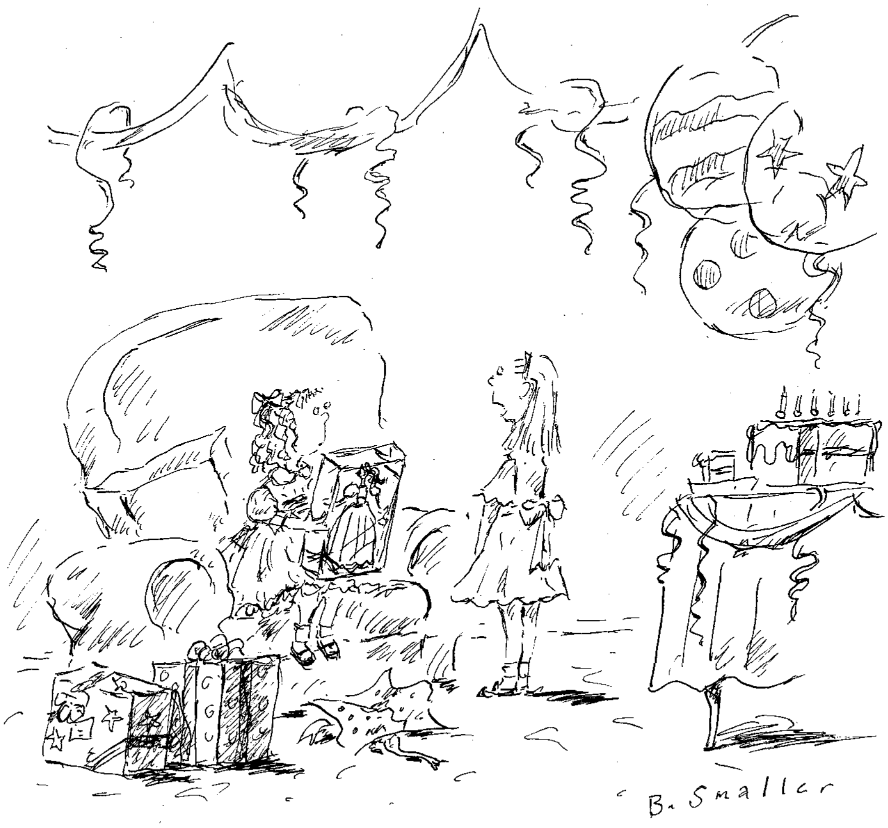
tinues to trouble some of Fleming's greatest admirers: Does she have that mysterious fusion of voice and personality that has distinguished the truly great prima donnas—Malibran, Adelina Patti, Mary Garden, Claudia Muzio, Rosa Ponselle, Kirsten Flagstad, Callas, Sutherland—from the merely excellent ones? Whether the difference is a matter of the spirit or of the imagination or both, it is essentially a quality of communication that says to the listener, "When I sing, I am not just pleasing you with my beautiful voice; I am letting you into the deepest part of myself."

Several of Fleming's recordings suggest that her virtuosity can sometimes be too much of a good thing. Her most popular albums, "The Beautiful Voice" and "Renée Fleming," are both slickly packaged to present her in a variety of poses, and, musically speaking, the recordings are her least satisfying ones. On the former, tempos are attenuated to the breaking point in order to showcase infinitely held high notes and exquisite dabs of vocal color. Occasionally, a song's dramatic meaning gets smothered by the over-caressing of phrases. (Jenny Lind's old standby " 'Tis the Last Rose of Summer" has so much finely spun gold that it evaporates.) On "Renée Fleming," she includes hit arias of various characters whom she has never portrayed onstage—Cio-Cio-San in "Madama Butterfly," the title characters of "La Wally" and "Norma"—and, although her voice is never less than magnificent, the characterizations lack nuance. Her languorous way with Musetta's Waltz from Act II of "La Bohème" would have sent the regulars at Café Momus into a blissful sleep.

Fleming has long thought about recording a jazz album, and Christopher Roberts at Universal Classics has agreed to what he carefully calls a "jazz-influenced" album of popular songs. "She doesn't want to do just another opera-voiced, crossover jazz album, of which there have been some awful examples in recent years," Roberts says. "And I've told her that she has to unlearn a great deal of operatic technique if she's going to be convincing on songs like 'Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered,' 'Chelsea Bridge,' and 'Midnight Sun.' To bring out the emo-



"Don't take her out of the box—she'll depreciate."

tional heart of this kind of material is very hard for someone who has Renée's musical equipment. But she has an extraordinary capacity to focus on a new challenge."

Fleming's one foray into crossover territory was a cameo appearance in 1998 on "My Secret Passion," an album of operatic arias sung by the pop star Michael Bolton, whose high, pretty tenor has sold millions of records. Fleming lent her voice to the first-act duet from "La Bohème," singing a ravishing Mimi to Bolton's adenoidal Rodolfo. Christopher Roberts found the collaboration questionable. "Renée is sometimes not as demanding as she should be," he says. "She wants to be accessible to everybody. But she needs to play a little harder to get."

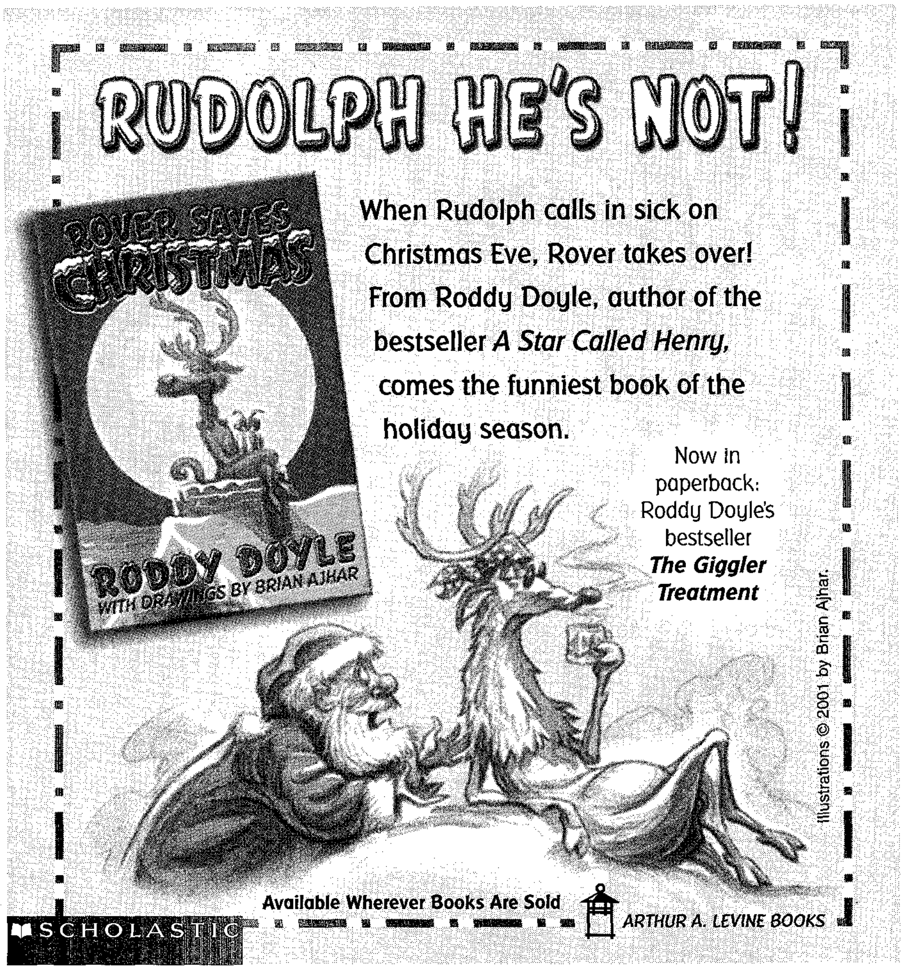
Fleming doesn't deny this. "I've never been good at saying no," she says. "I'm in a place where everyone wants a piece of me—managers, the recording people, the press, and, of course, my daughters. Then, there is the question of *me*. I am just beginning to learn what it's like to be a woman on my own. And there is so much that I want to explore for myself."

A few nights after a performance of "Don Giovanni" in Salzburg, she arrived at the Sacher Hotel for dinner. She was sipping a glass of wine at the bar when she spotted a couple having dinner in the dining room. "Plácido!" she cried out, and rushed over to the table. Plácido Domingo embraced her. "You were a beautiful Donna Anna!" he exclaimed. "And the 'Non mi dir' was fantastic!" He pressed two fingers to his lips, in appreciation.

"Thank you!" Fleming said.

"But if I may say so," Domingo went on, "you must be careful not to put too much verismo in it. For Mozart, it must be more . . . contained."

Fleming took this in with the rapt expression of a schoolgirl. But later, when I asked whether she agreed with Domingo's advice, she replied, "Well, yes and no. The excitement of what I do is to constantly push myself, vocally and dramatically. I am always learning new things. I want everything I do to become more expressive—not just my singing and my acting but my life. What you're seeing is a work in progress." ♦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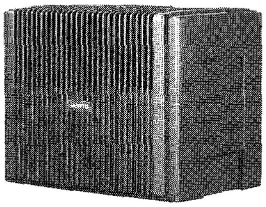
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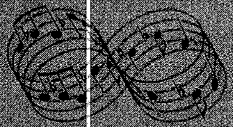

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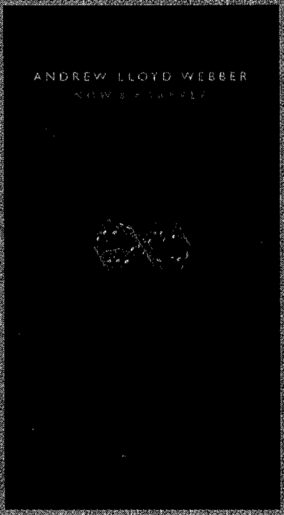

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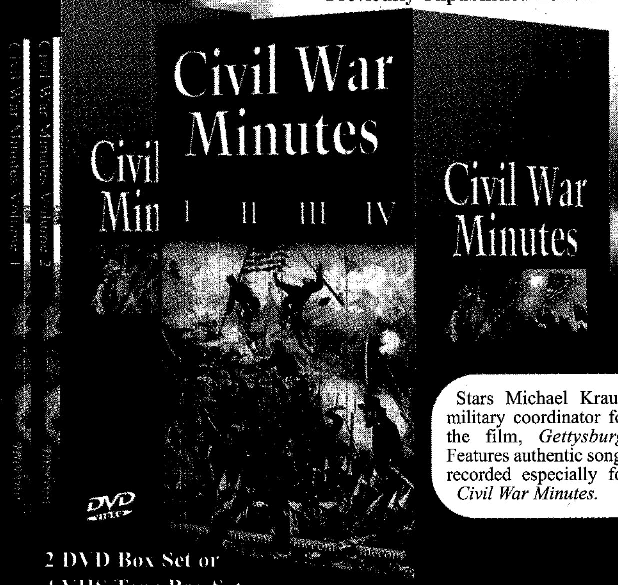

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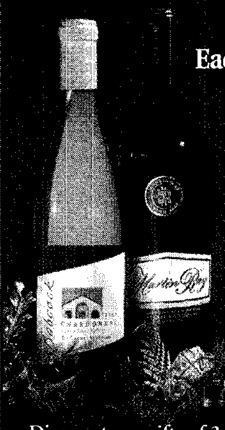

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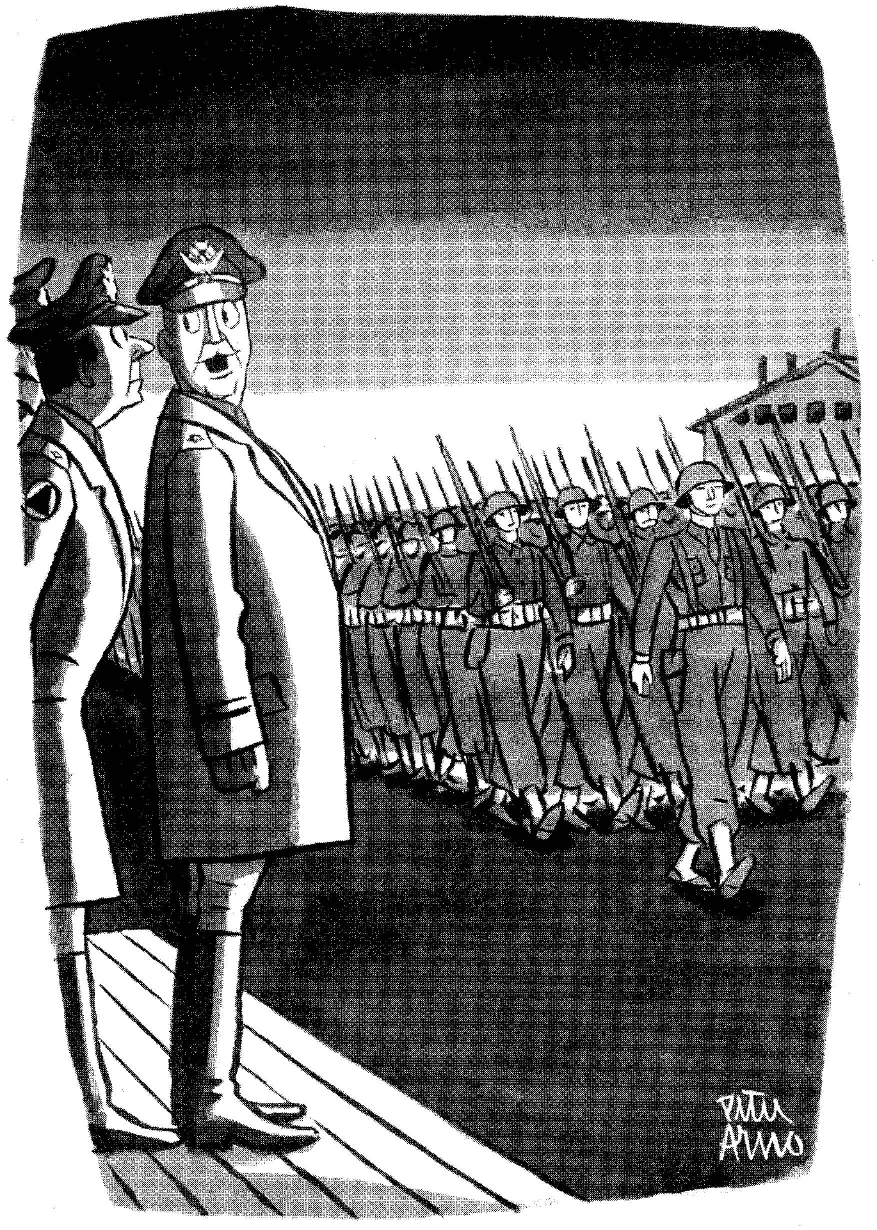
ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

UNIFORM BLISS

What was funny when The New Yorker first went to war.

BY ROGER ANGELL

When this country found itself at war in December, 1941, *The New Yorker* wanted to be useful but didn't always know how. The magazine's artists were quick off the mark, and within a couple of issues there came a full-page, wincingly xenophobic takeoff of "The Mikado," with the toothy, swastika-robed gentlemen of Japan grinning amid descending bombs and paratroops. The drawing was by the former art director Rea Irvin (the creator of the dandified Eustace Tilley figure for *The New Yorker's* first cover), but today the work feels like an editorial-page blast in one of the old Hearst papers. A drawing by Alan Dunn—cartoons were always called "drawings" then—two pages farther along in the same issue showed a young civilian enlistee smoking a cigarette as he takes his ease on the desk of a recruiting officer, who offers, "Very good. And now Sergeant Wallace will acquaint you with our little list of 'Don'ts.' " This was more like it. *The New Yorker* was a devoutly civilian magazine—the Army uniforms in the Dunn gag are executed with extreme uncertainty—and in the end it decided to stay that way. It would represent itself by old instinct and habit, but not in the guise of a recruiting poster or with the Hemingway swagger of a front-line celebrity. This turned out to be a brilliant decision.



"Now be sure and point out any celebrities."

William Steig's cover for July 17, 1943, has lost none of its innocence and bite. One of his brash urchins dreams himself a fighter ace routing Messerschmitts and German bombers (you can almost hear his own accompanying sound effects) in a four-color episode from the artist's "Dreams of Glory" series. In another one, which ran in the February 19, 1944, issue, the kid is a cowboy with a six-gun who's got the drop on Hitler, right in his headquarters, while his cayuse waits outside the door. Steig, still active at the age of ninety-four, has always been the youngest artist on the planet, but his sleeping, safely tucked-in pilot breaks your heart now. Kids don't dream like this anymore—they're online, they're in "The Simpsons," they're trading Digimon cards with Kobe and Shaq—and a ten-year-old noticing that four-engine plane in the lower right-hand corner would feel the same jolt of unease that his parents do. Were we ever as sweet as Steig would have us? Maybe, but not now.

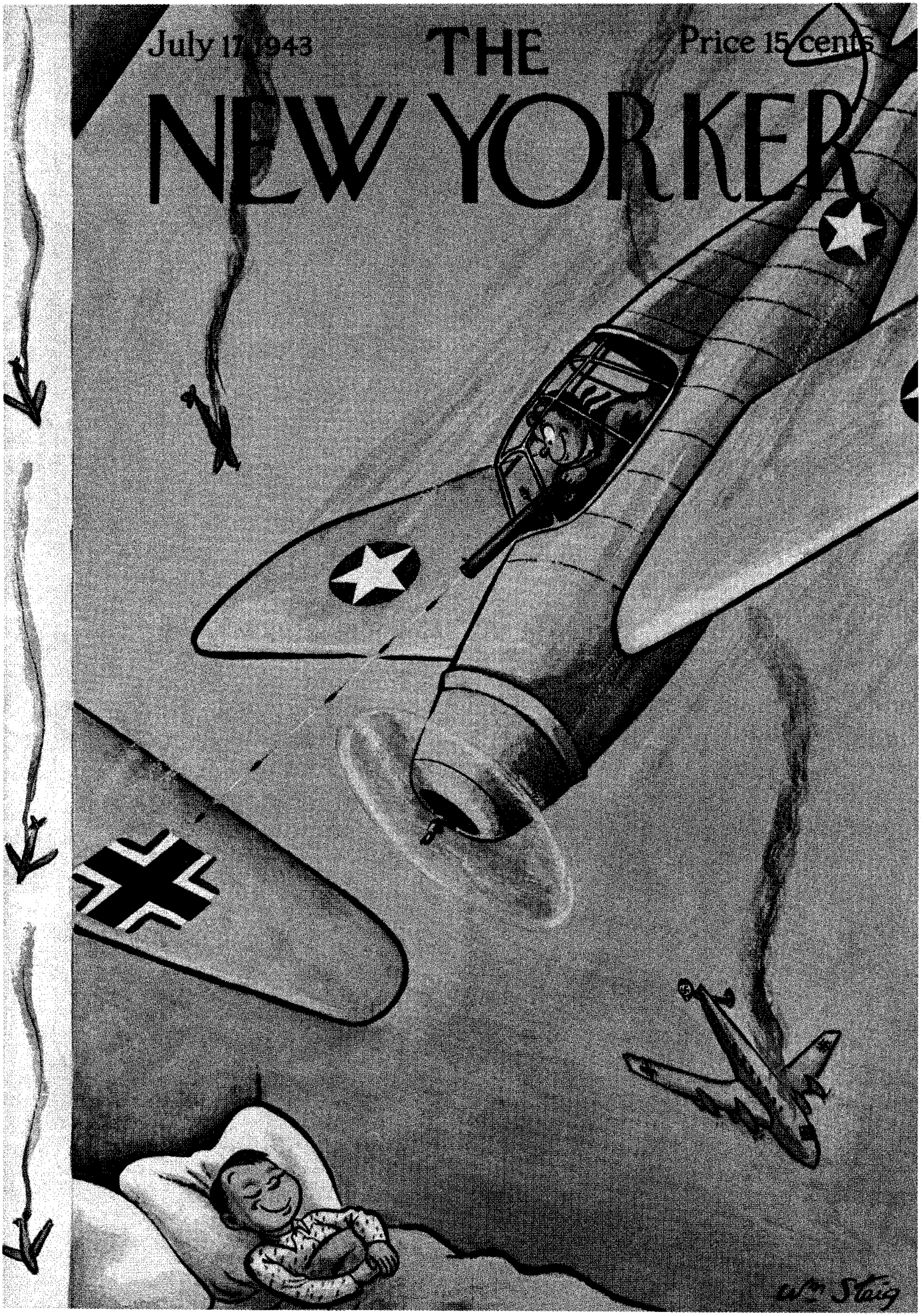
Mary Petty's housemaid in a gas mask makes a rococo grasshopper in the mirror, but she is also a reassuring character from Petty's peaceful and eloquent watercolor world. The gas-mask reference is British in origin: everyone in England, down to toddlers, toted these masks through the Blitz of 1940 and '41, but it never happened here. The maid looks

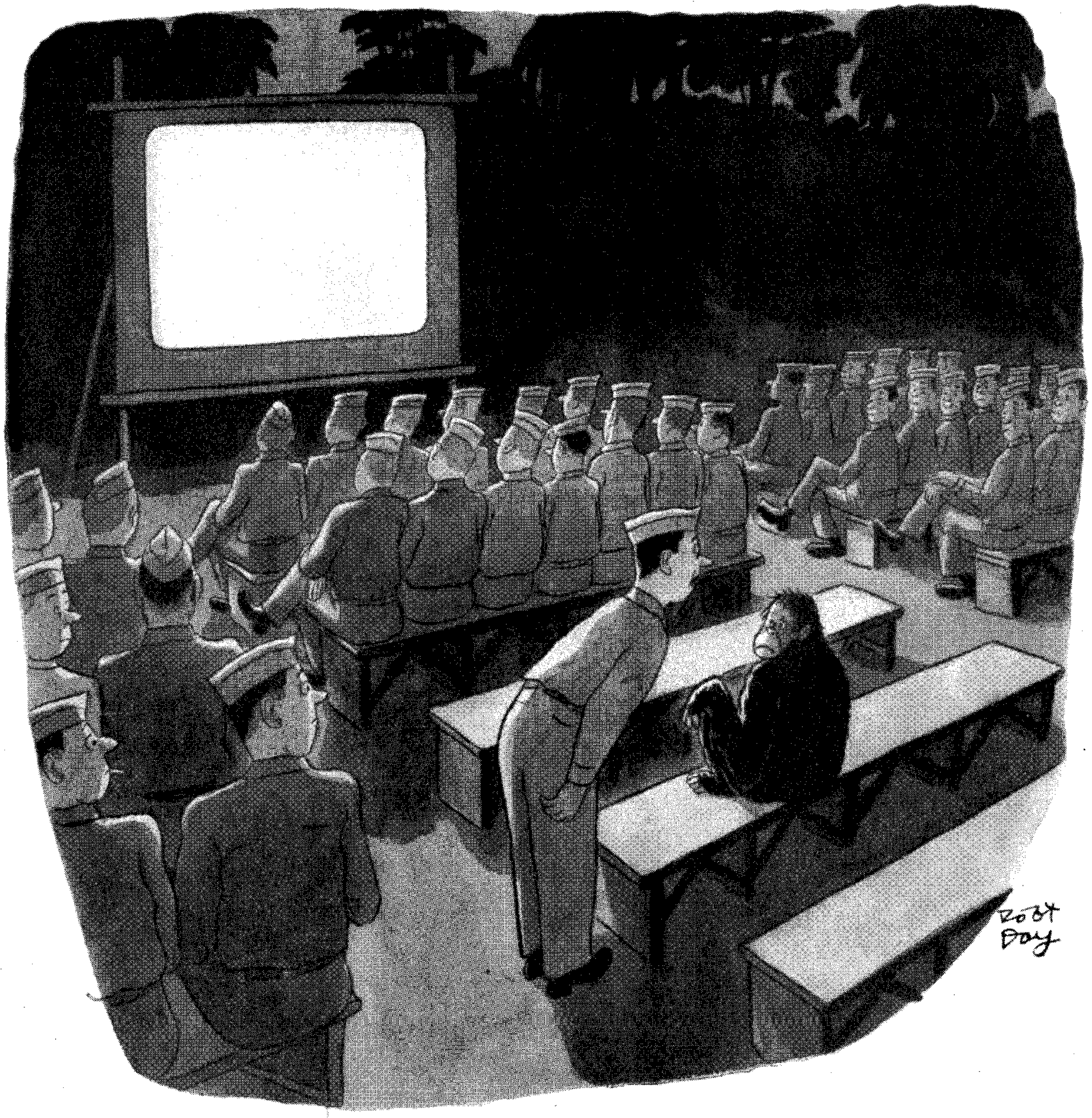
ARNO, 2/20/43; OPPOSITE: STEIG, 7/17/43. MORE SECOND WORLD WAR CARTOONS AT NEWYORKER.COM

July 17, 1943

THE NEW YORKER

Price 15 cents





"I'm sorry. This section is reserved for officers."

out of date now but suddenly not the mask. If *New Yorker* readers felt at home with Petty's domestics and ormolu back then, they could also recognize Peter Arno's white-mustached harrumpher in the guise of an Army general on the reviewing stand. So many of us had gone into the service that movie stars and even some politicians were turning up in uniform: that's the kicker here. Joe DiMaggio was a sergeant-ballplayer in my Seventh Air Force outfit in Hawaii.

Arno's lubricious eye could also be counted on in wartime. A hooker in a doorway, mysterious in the artist's dark washes, is eyed nervously by a fresh-minted G.I., who whispers to his companion, "Is that one?" And Otto Soglow, in inky black-and-white, puts the dame on a corner, smiling invitingly in her fur jacket and air-raid warden's armband.

The magazine felt more comfortable in its war effort as strain and change became commonplace. G.I.s in jeeps and chow lines and aboard troop ships were good for a flood of supportive, rather mild gags, while the home front, with its ration books and rumors, victory gardens and manpower shortages, got better attention. Home was where the artists stayed, or most of them, including George Price, whose frumpy housewife and shabby, exquisitely rendered furniture are joined this time by urgent pigeons. Alan Dunn drew a family cook kept on the job by a leg iron attached to her stove, and Mischa Richter's ballpark peanut vender excuses himself to a fan with "Be right back. I'm up next." A Roberta Macdonald thief steals the tires from a parked sedan, only to find his getaway car similarly stripped on his return. Charles Addams drew a hoarder hideously cackling as he fondles a priceless Goodyear, in a Victorian room heaped high with fresh-tread rubber. And Helen Hokinson's wide-waisted suburban ladies go off to the opera together with the thought "Well, there's *one* good thing about it. We won't have to feel so sorry for Madame Butterfly any more." Everything has changed at home,

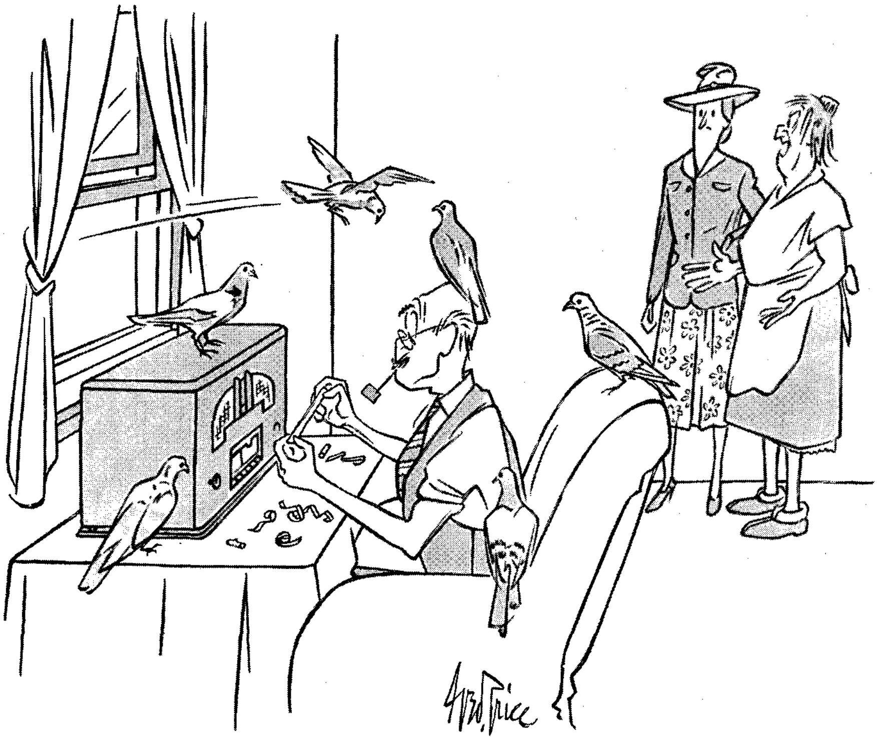
DAY, 6/24/44; OPPOSITE TOP: STEINBERG, 2/24/45; BOTTOM: PRICE, 5/30/42

but everything is still the same. That became the sustaining great joke about the war in the magazine, even though it wasn't true, and it worked every week.

As the conflict widened and grew more bloody, *The New Yorker's* reportage, from columnists like Mollie Panter-Downes and Janet Flanner, and correspondents like A. J. Liebling, E. J. Kahn, Jr., John Lardner, Walter Bernstein, Philip Hamburger, John Hersey, and others, took up more space in the magazine and began to change its tone, while local reporting languished. Lardner landed with the troops at Anzio, and did it again, a year and a half later, at Iwo Jima. A younger brother of his, David Lardner, also a *New Yorker* correspondent, was killed in Europe late in 1944. The magazine had grown up and was transforming itself into the publication that would run the most profound war piece of all, Hersey's "Hiroshima," when peacetime came. Its youthful and insular early sophistication hadn't survived, but cartoons lightened the loss.

The artists didn't travel much, it seemed. An exception, Saul Steinberg, arrived in the States in 1942 as a Romanian refugee (*The New Yorker* helped with his entry papers, on the strength of some drawings he had submitted), and was soon assigned to the Office of Strategic Services, the predecessor of the C.I.A. Dispatched to faraway theatres of war in Italy, India, and China, he sent back spreads of drawings and local vignettes, done with the clarifying new eye and line that were to distinguish his work in the magazine for the next fifty-five years. Political and artistic by sensibility and a European forever, he could transform Field Marshal Göring into an operetta clown, with neon-lit swastikas on the shoulders of his over-medalled uniform. The Wehrmacht and the Nazis, for all their danger, made readier butts than the Japanese: Hitler most of all. Rea Irvin drew him as a Halloween witch riding a broomstick, and Al Frueh had him counting sheep from his bed—sheep running full tilt out of Russia. After word of the death camps came out, the cartoon Hitler vanished.

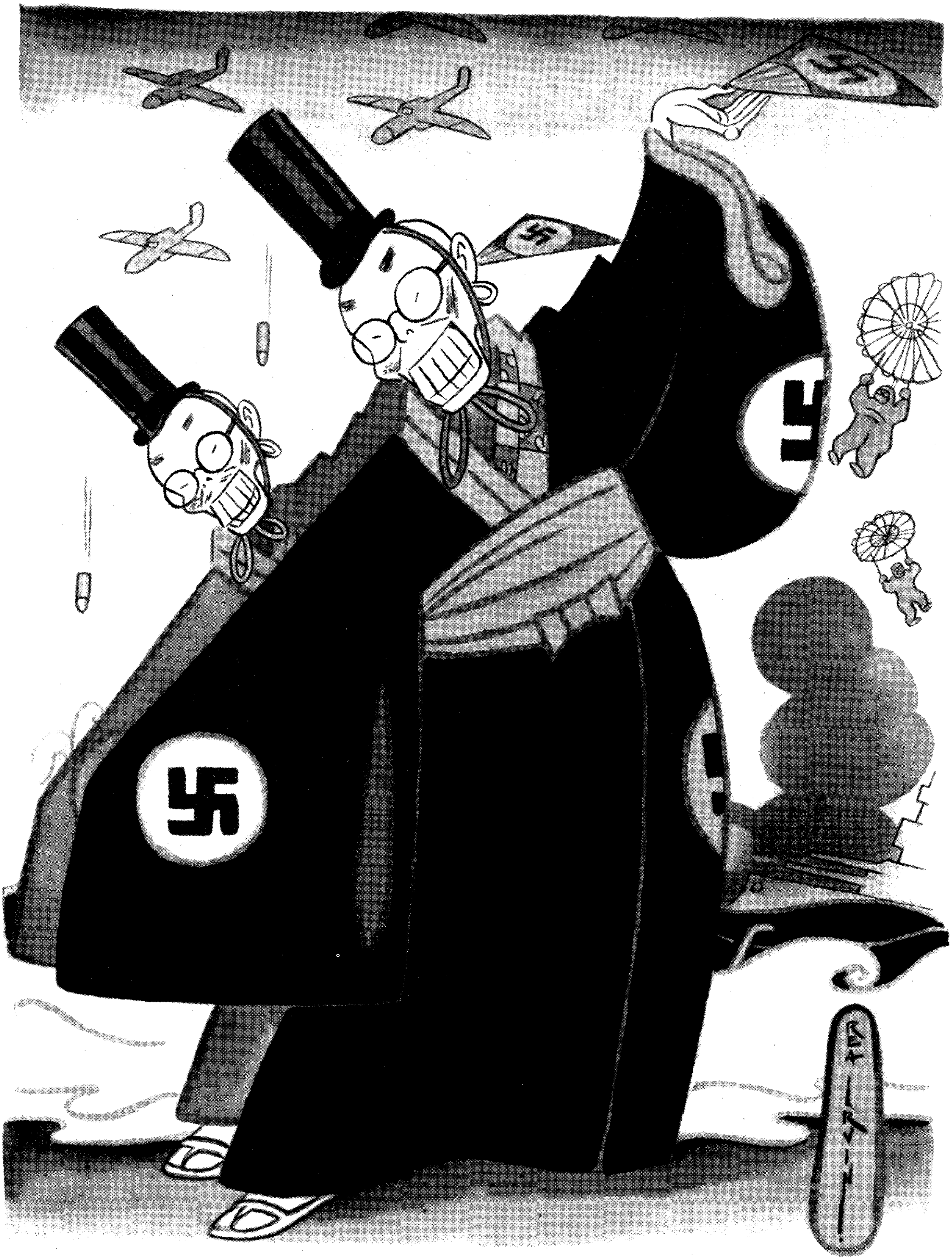
I tried to stay abreast of *The New Yorker* wherever the Army sent me, but, like everyone else, I relied on the G.I. publications, *Yank* and *Stars & Stripes*, to keep me up to date. These were written and edited by enlisted men, which guaranteed a low-down, unenthusiastic flavor. "Something smells terribly good," a *Yank* cartoon mess sergeant muses in his kitchen. "I wonder what it could be." *Yank* ran first-class combat reporting, like Sergeant Mack Morriss's account of the carnage at Huertgen Forest, in Germany, but the magazine's true calling was complaint. Its letters column became a Bible of bitching, and a much loved weekly cartoon feature, "The Sad Sack," by Sergeant George Baker, presented a beaten-down, no-hope private eternally subjected to fatigue detail at the hands of Neanderthal sergeants and chickenshit lieutenants and majors. I recall a strip that had the Sad Sack flinching and gagging as he watched the horrific sex-hygiene training film that was compulsory for enlisted soldiers (the Army later came up with milder versions of this full-frontal anti-V.D. assault) and then pulling on a rubber glove before shaking hands with a buddy's date. *The New Yorker's* current cartoon editor, Bob Mankoff, believes that gags like this were the equivalent of office cartoons in that G.I. world.



"It's the Times bulletins every hour on the hour, the Daily News bulletins every hour on the half-hour, and those damn carrier pigeons in between."

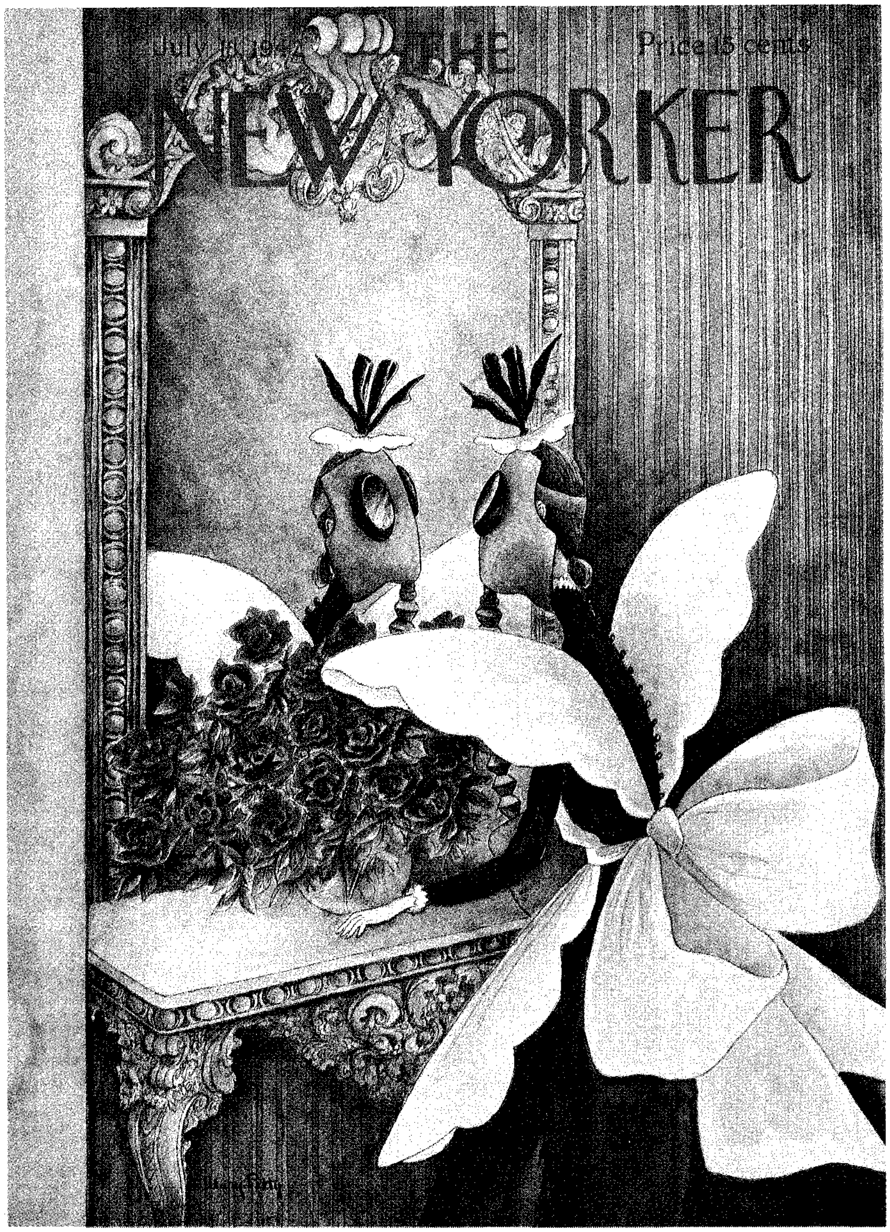
Bill Mauldin's "Up Front" feature, in *Stars & Stripes*, stuck to combat soldiers and conveyed a more sardonic view of the war. His bearded and baggy-eyed Willie and Joe, bent double under their toted weaponry and glum expectations, were engaged in survival. "Just gimme a coupla aspirin," Willie says at a muddy aid station. "I already got a Purple Heart." Stuff like this heartened the poor slobs in foxholes, and somehow complimented the rest of us, as well, in our safe stations away from the shooting. Mauldin's drawing of a first sergeant administering the coup de grâce to a broken-down jeep was another insider's joke: the cavalry had long since been motorized but sentimentally clung to its ancient moniker.

Mauldin's G.I.s didn't look like the jungle troops watching a movie in company with a chimp, in Robert Day's engaging 1944 cartoon, but you forgave it because it ran in a non-Army rag, *The New Yorker*. Day's soldiers are in full uni-

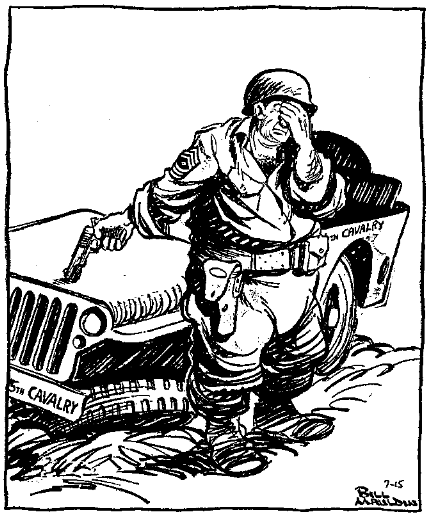


"If you want to know who we are,
We are gentlemen of Japan."

form, almost sitting at attention, instead of smoking and raunchily catcalling in their fatigues, but the laugh is what counts.



Mary Petty's snowy maidservant in a gas-mask cover was strictly disarming.



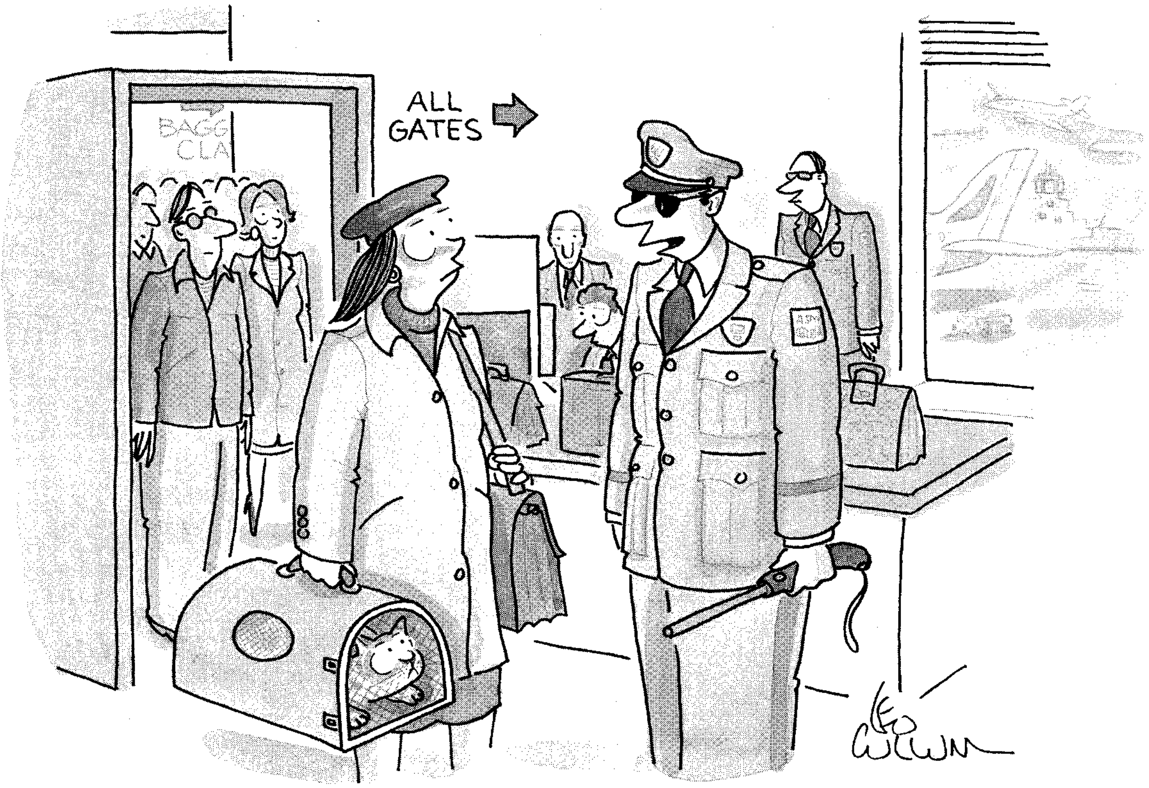
Bill Mauldin's rumpled, combat-weary non-coms had the right G.I. look for Stars & Stripes.

I went off to the Pacific in the winter of 1944; the magazine had preceded me there by a few months, in its new, pony-sized overseas edition. Free copies started to turn up on PX shelves and in dayrooms—*The New Yorker*, all right, but reduced in size by about a third, and skinnier, since it contained no advertising. There were similarly shrivelled editions of *Time* and *Newsweek* which you could keep in your barracks bag or stuff into a back pocket. In the States, my old, full-sized issues of the magazine had sometimes been passed about by curious barracks-mates, many of whom hadn't encountered it before. But the overseas edition became an instant hit, because it contained so many cartoons, along with that vivid war reporting. In 1945, special cartoon editions came along, as well—not a culling from the issue that Stateside subscribers and newsstand buyers were reading that week but thicker little books that revived some bygone classics: Peter Arno's idiot drowning in the shower; Thurber's mysterious beast who seemed to have eaten Dr. Millmoss; George Price's tenement gent in midair over his bed; Charles Addams's "Congratulations! It's a baby" (maternity nurse to doddery, birdlike new dad), and "Oh, speak up, George! Stop mumbling!" (wife to python-gulped hubby behind her). I already knew these by heart, but suddenly I had fresh company. The magazine's circulation had been going through the roof—its readership nearly doubled between Pearl Harbor and the end of 1946—and the overseas edition was credited with finding a whole new subscription base of readers and cartoon devourers in the years that followed.

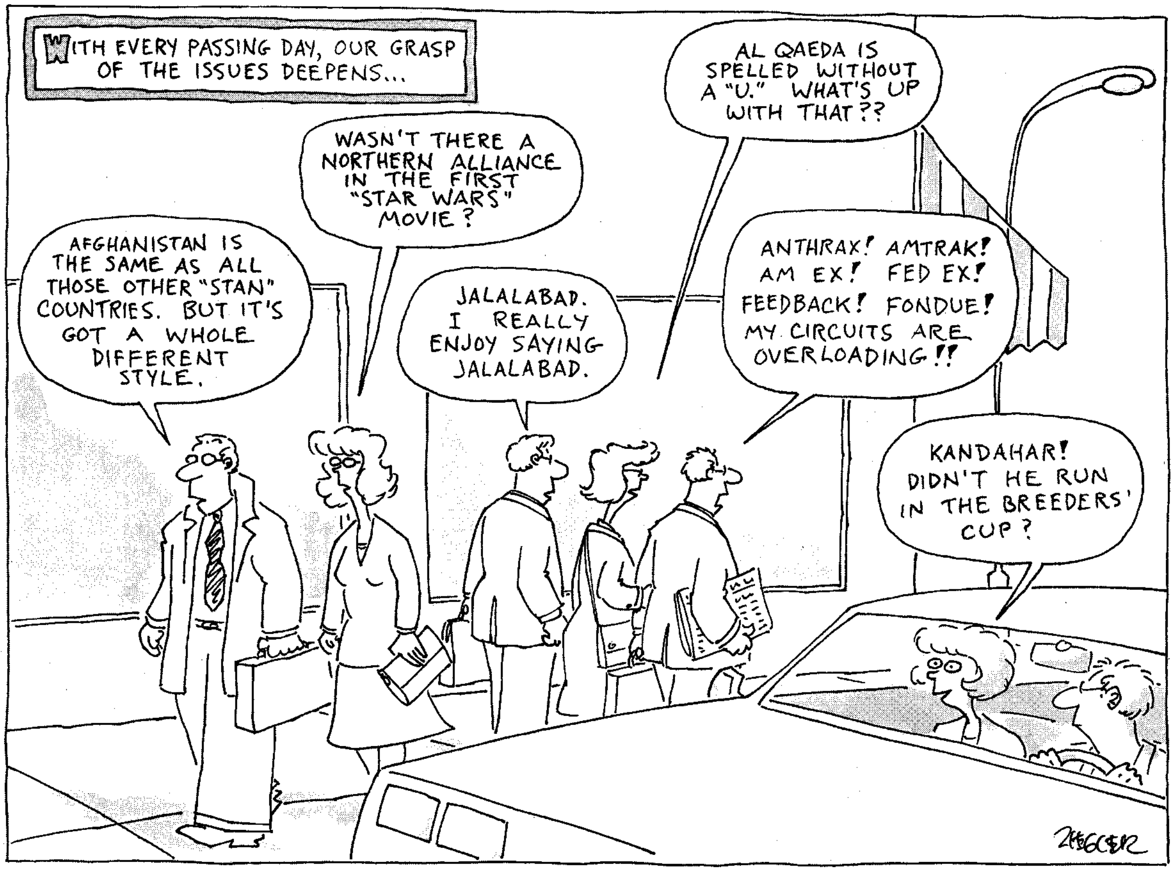
The overseas edition had an unexpected effect: it made me miss the real thing. I wrote home and begged my wife and family to mail me some copies—the full magazine, not just the C-ration version we'd been handed—and I remember the rush of pleasure I had, weeks later, in unwrapping a battered, well-stamped big envelope and taking out the outdated but deliciously larger *New Yorkers*. Here in full dimensions was a Whitney Darrow waitress happily telling a restaurant diner, "We're all out of everything," and an Addams mortician teaching his dog to play dead. Here was The Talk of the Town and fiction and poems and spot drawings, and newsbreaks at the bottom of the page. Goings On About Town was up in front, with its supper clubs and movie listings, and there were theatre reviews and the racetrack column and the books section in the back, all surrounded by stacks of advertising. I gazed at color ads for Dewar's "White Label" Whisky and Rheingold Beer, and for a promised Cadillac somewhere down the line. I found a full-page woman in bed, wearing a Lord & Taylor nightdress—"So French-looking—quite irresistible"—for $10.95. *The New Yorker* hadn't flinched: in soul and pocketbook it was always a civilian magazine, and civilians was what we longed to become again, almost any day now. ♦

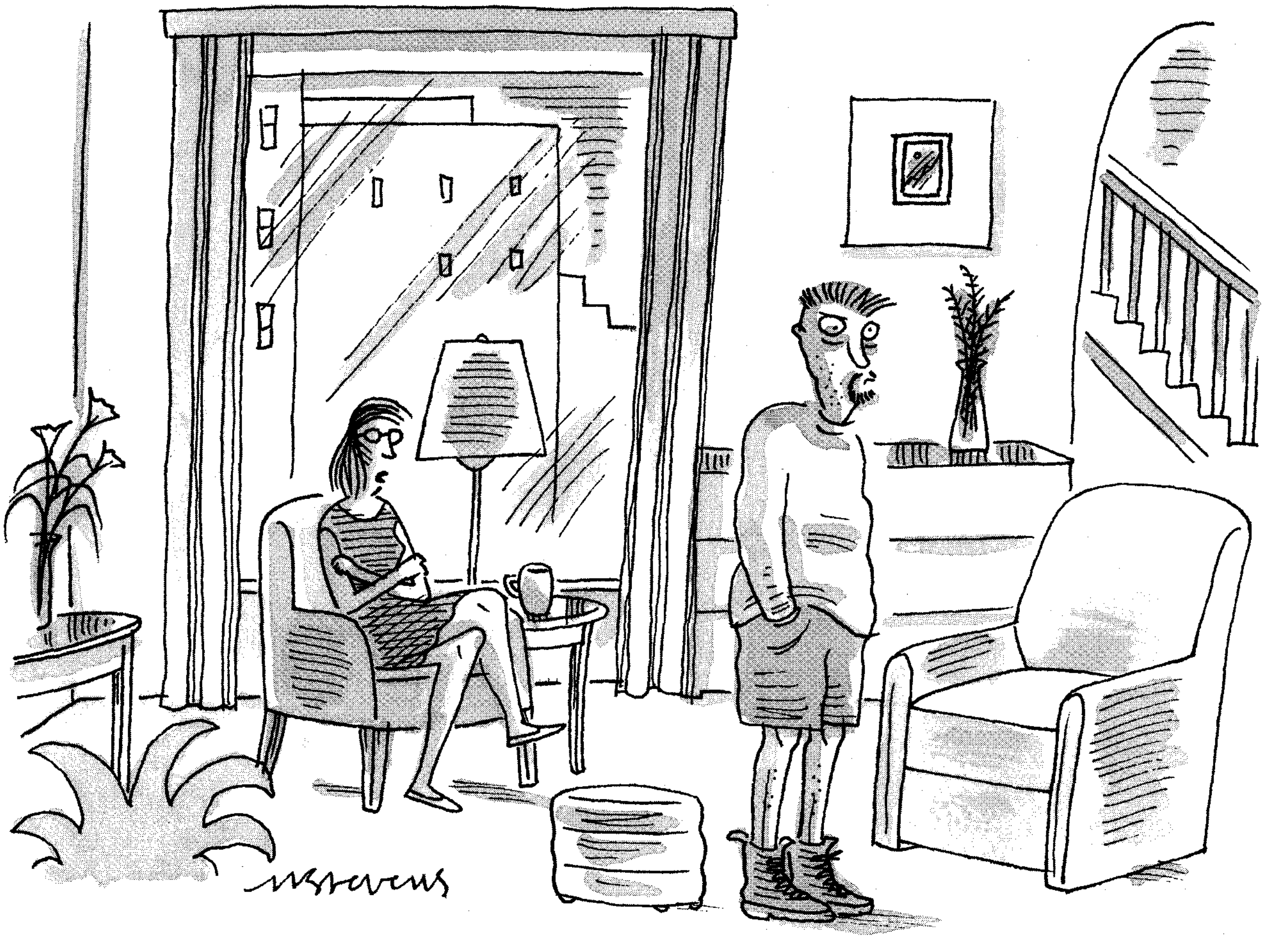
OPPOSITE: IRVIN, 12/20/41; TOP: PETTY, 7/18/42; BOTTOM: REPRINTED BY PERMISSION OF BILL MAULDIN AND THE WATKINS/LOOMIS AGENCY

THE WAY WE LAUGH NOW

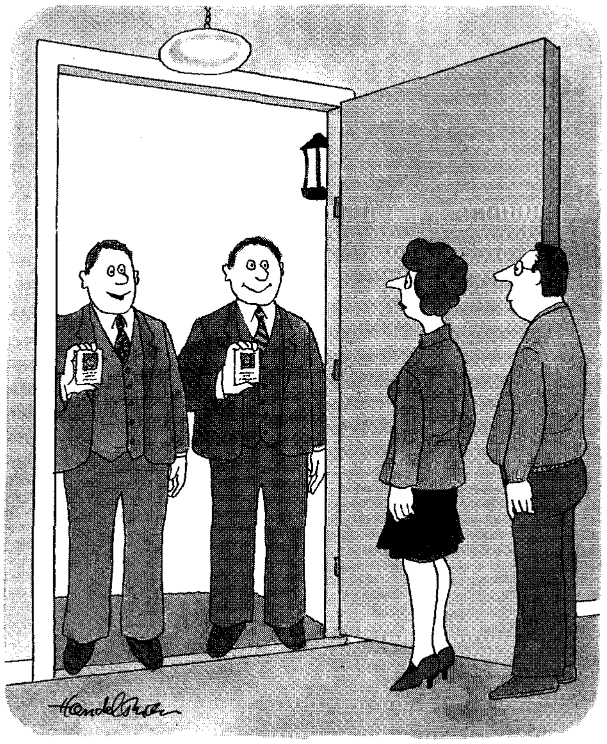

BAGG CLA
ALL GATES

"We'll need to declaw the cat."

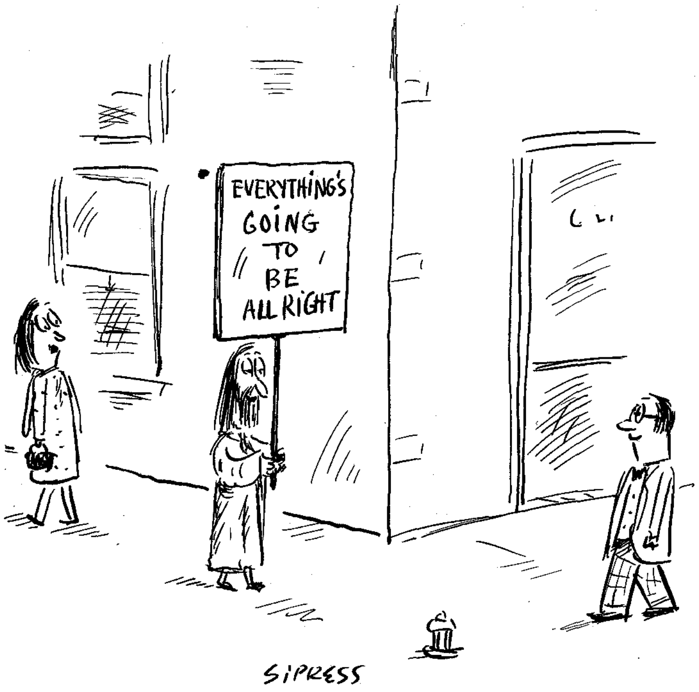

WITH EVERY PASSING DAY, OUR GRASP OF THE ISSUES DEEPENS...
AFGHANISTAN IS THE SAME AS ALL THOSE OTHER "STAN" COUNTRIES. BUT IT'S GOT A WHOLE DIFFERENT STYLE.
WASN'T THERE A NORTHERN ALLIANCE IN THE FIRST "STAR WARS" MOVIE?
JALALABAD. I REALLY ENJOY SAYING JALALABAD.
AL QAEDA IS SPELLED WITHOUT A "U." WHAT'S UP WITH THAT??
ANTHRAX! AMTRAK! AM EX! FED EX! FEEDBACK! FONDUE! MY CIRCUITS ARE OVERLOADING!!
KANDAHAR! DIDN'T HE RUN IN THE BREEDERS' CUP?
ZIEGLER

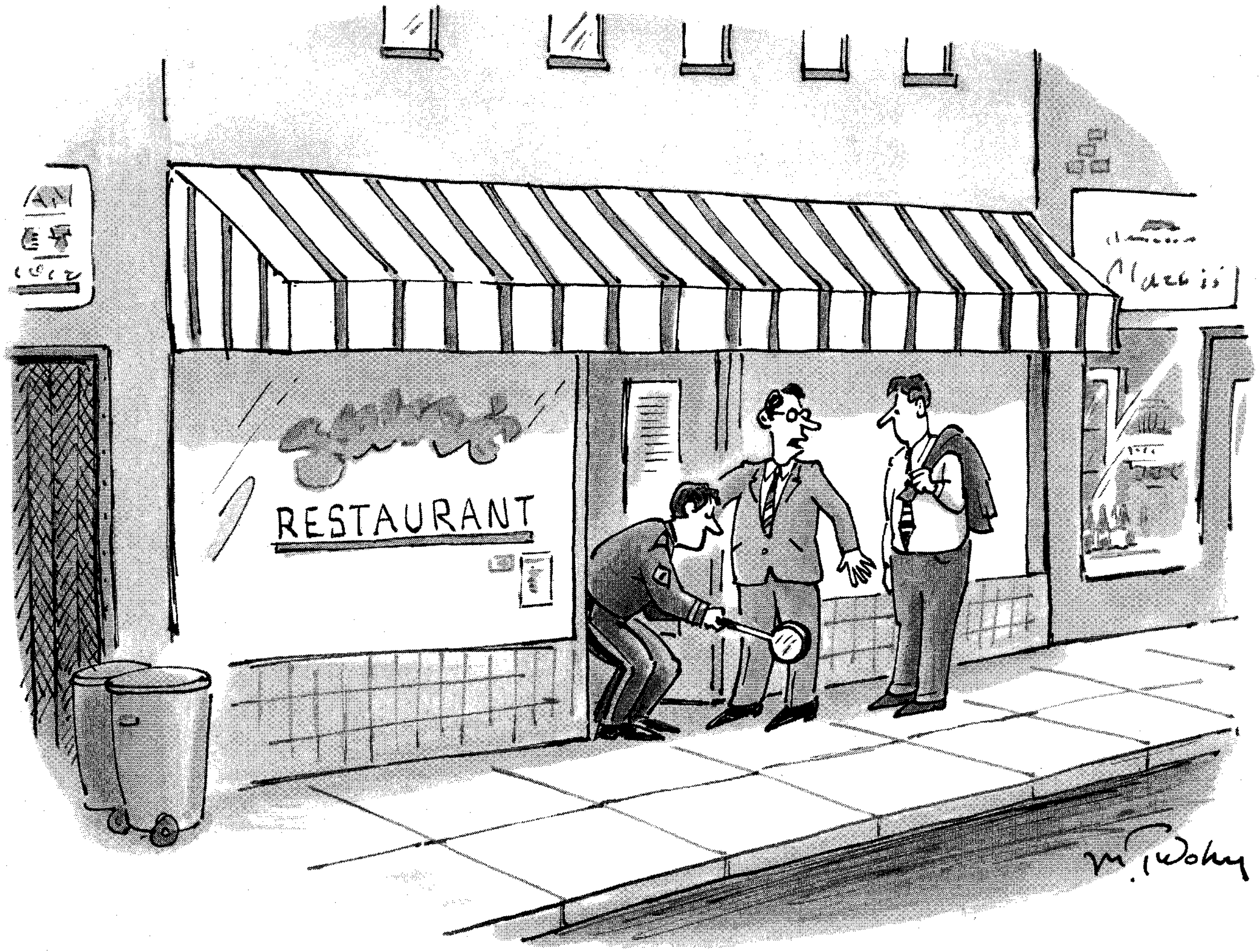


“You can’t expect to get back to normal if you never were normal.”

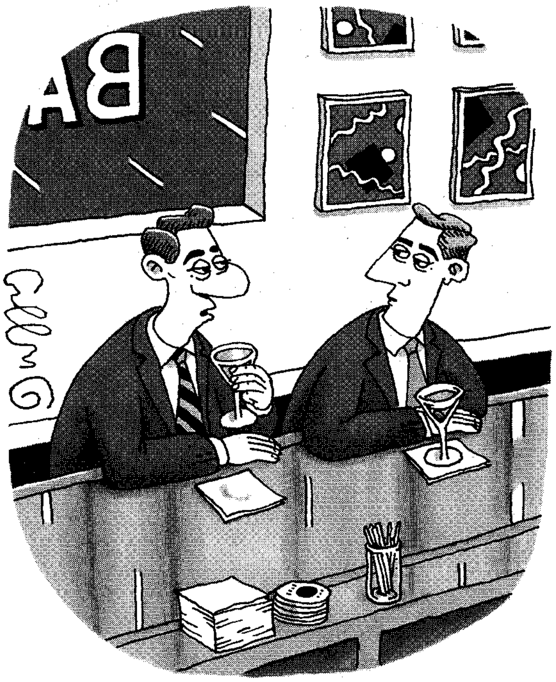


“We’re from the F.B.I., going from house to house making sure that everyone is scared shitless.”

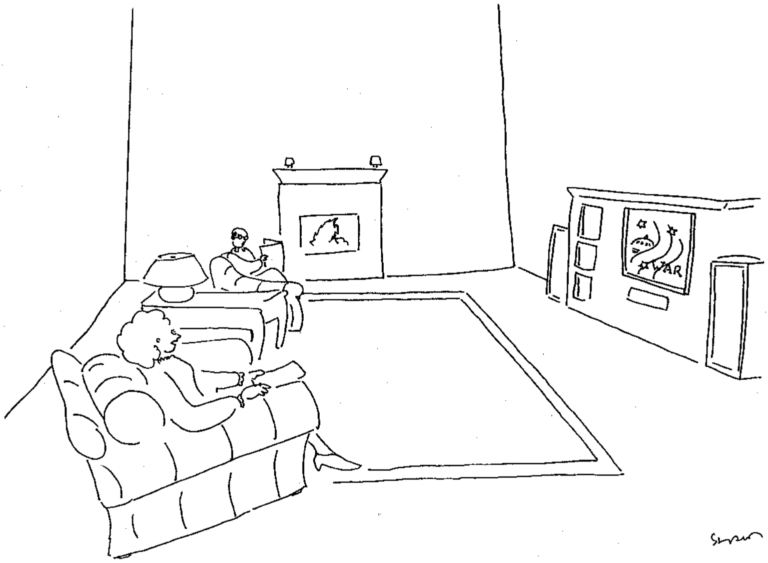

EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT



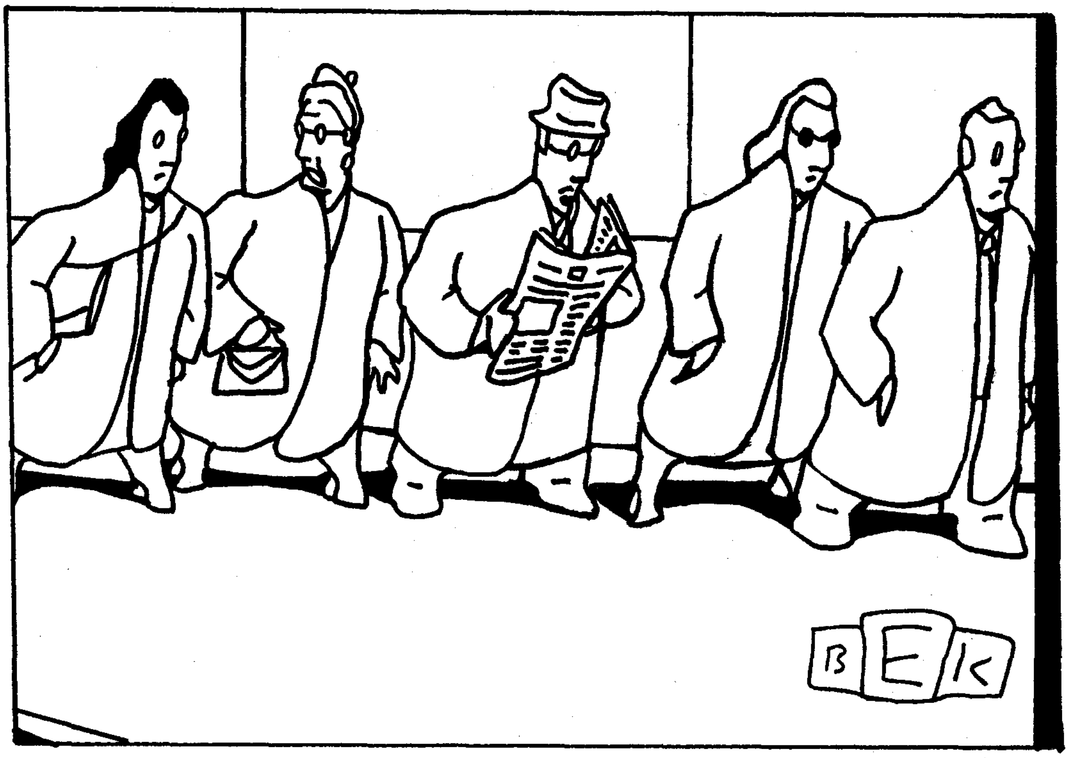
"The food is just so-so, but the security is fantastic."



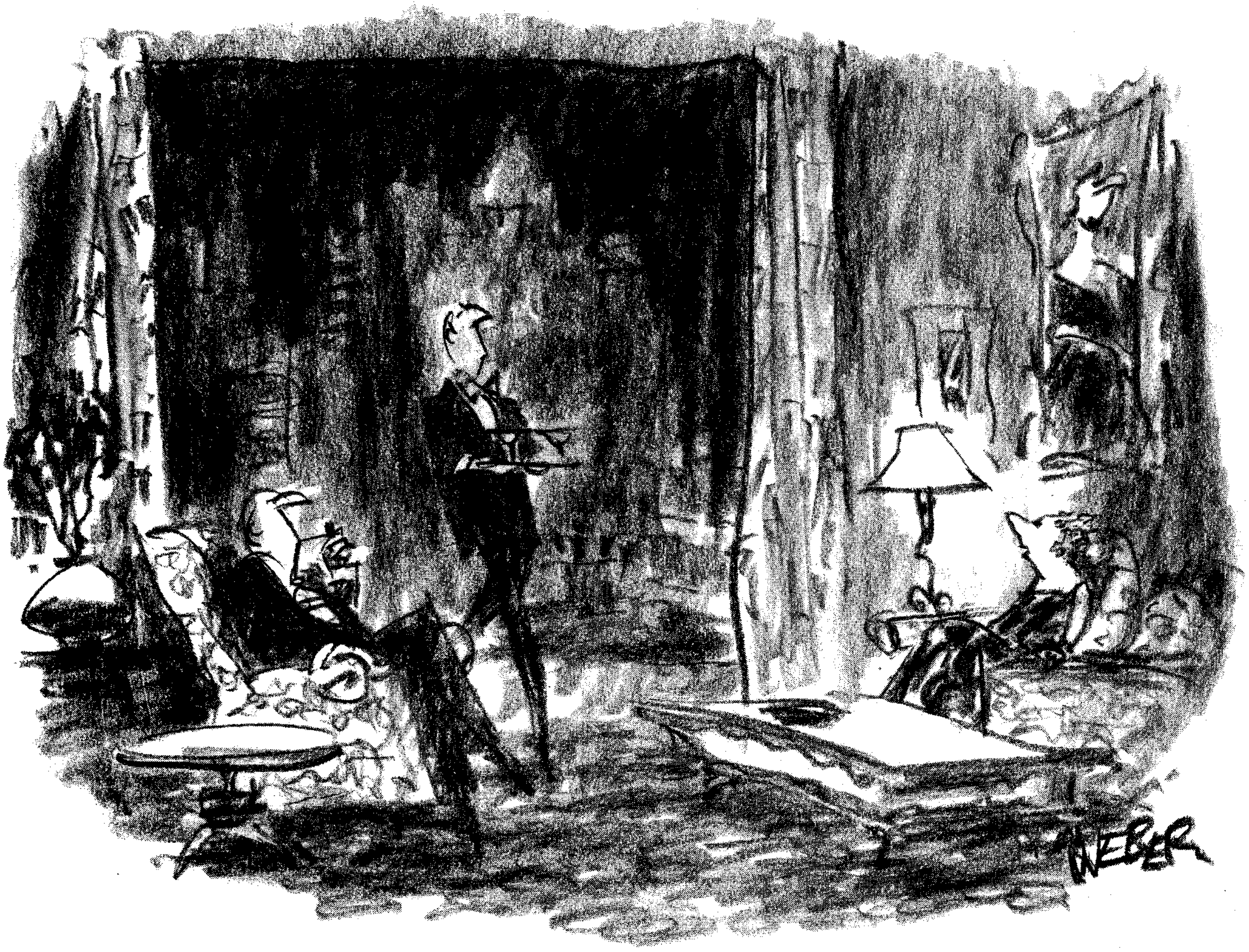
"I figure if I don't have that third Martini, then the terrorists win."



"I liked the theme to the Gulf War better."

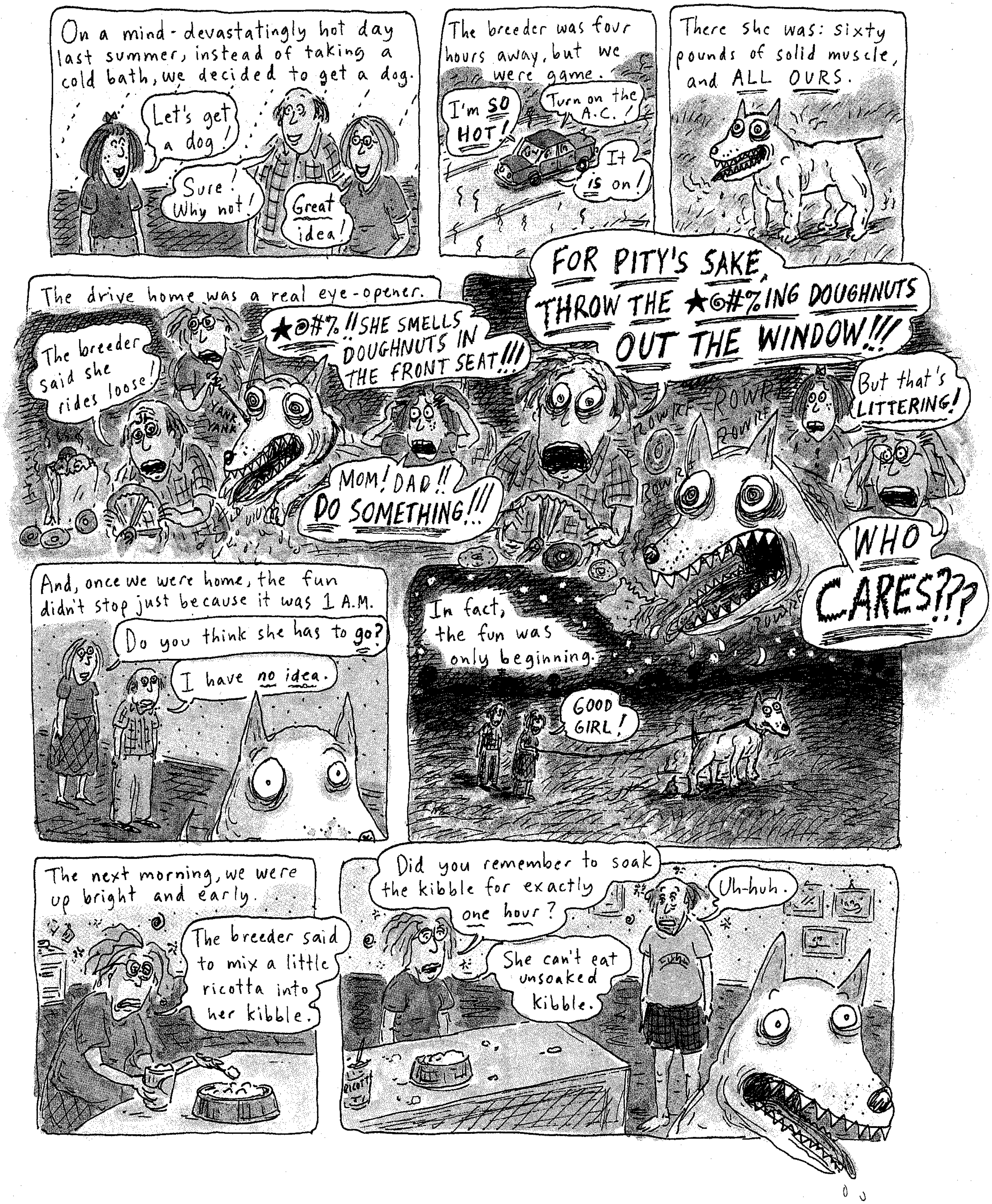


"It's hard, but slowly I'm getting back to hating everyone."

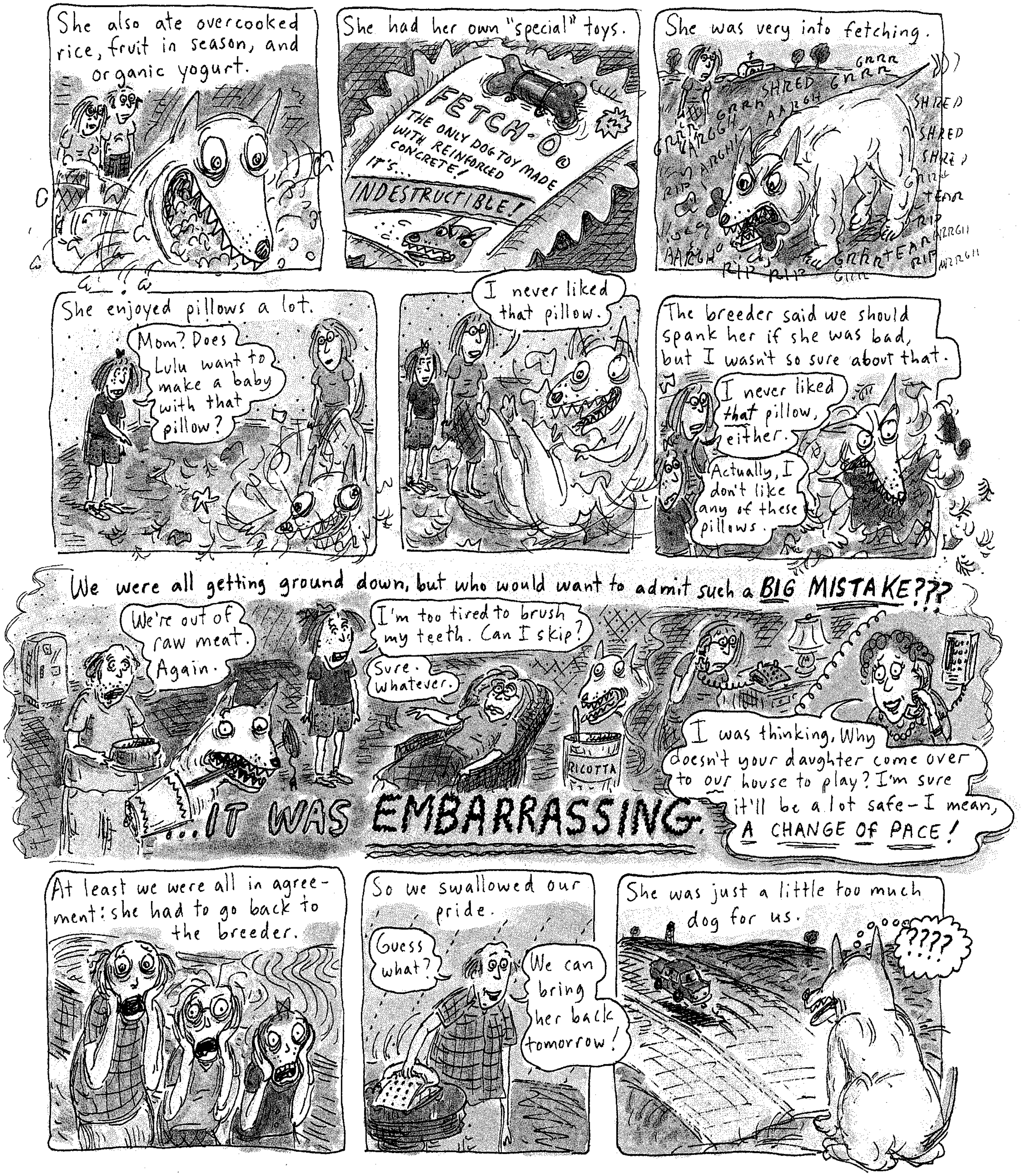


"We should consider ourselves fortunate. At least we have food and shelter."

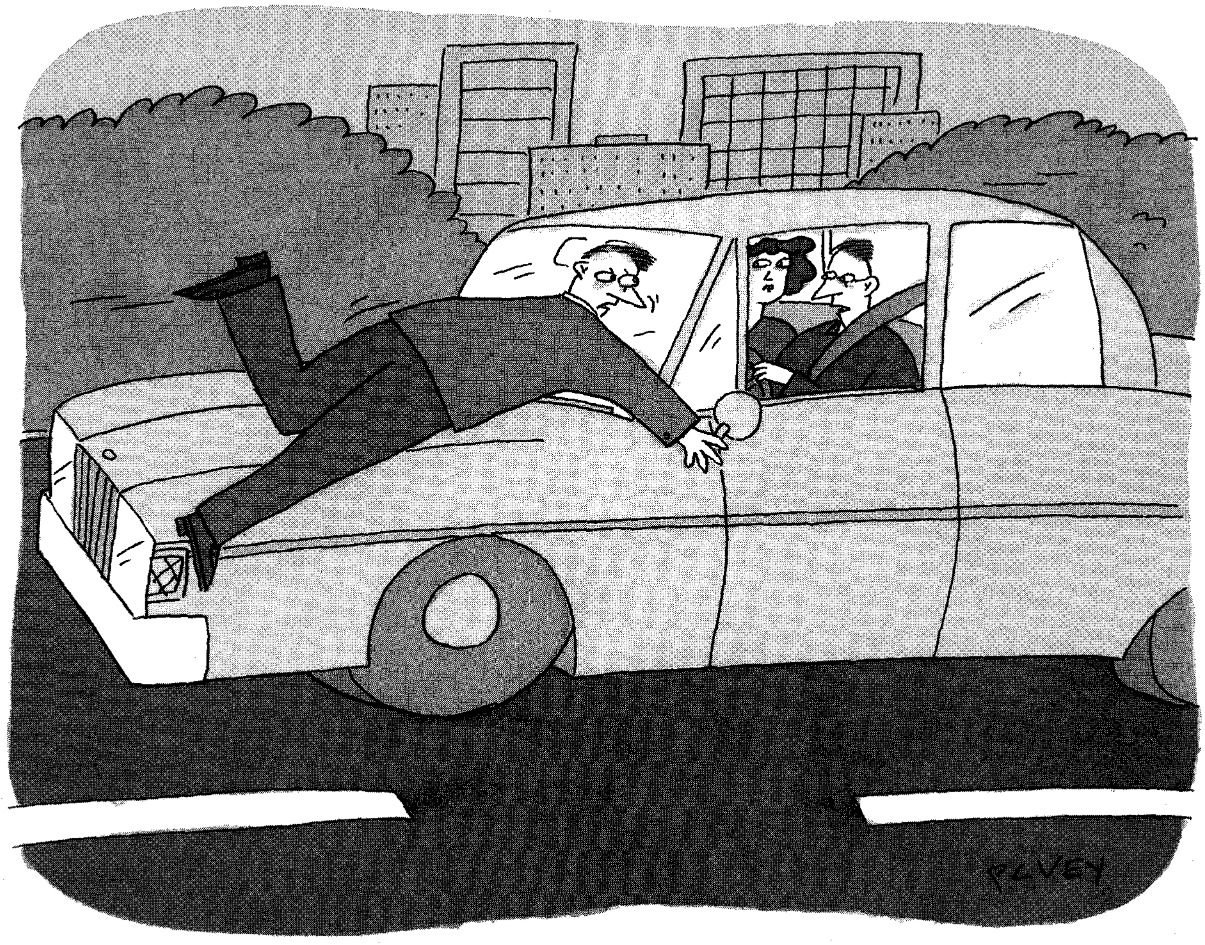
DOG DAY


On a mind-devastatingly hot day last summer, instead of taking a cold bath, we decided to get a dog.
Let's get a dog!
Sure! Why not!
Great idea!
The breeder was four hours away, but we were game.
I'm SO HOT!
Turn on the A.C.!
It is on!
There she was: sixty pounds of solid muscle, and ALL OURS.
The drive home was a real eye-opener.
The breeder said she rides loose!
YANK YANK
★@#%!! SHE SMELLS DOUGHNUTS IN THE FRONT SEAT!!!
FOR PITY'S SAKE, THROW THE ★@#%ING DOUGHNUTS OUT THE WINDOW!!!
MOM! DAD!! DO SOMETHING!!!
ROWRF ROWRF ROWRF
But that's LITTERING!
WHO CARES???
ROWRF
And, once we were home, the fun didn't stop just because it was 1 A.M.
Do you think she has to go?
I have no idea.
In fact, the fun was only beginning.
GOOD GIRL!
The next morning, we were up bright and early.
The breeder said to mix a little ricotta into her kibble.
Did you remember to soak the kibble for exactly one hour?
Uh-huh.
She can't eat unsoaked kibble.
RICOTTA

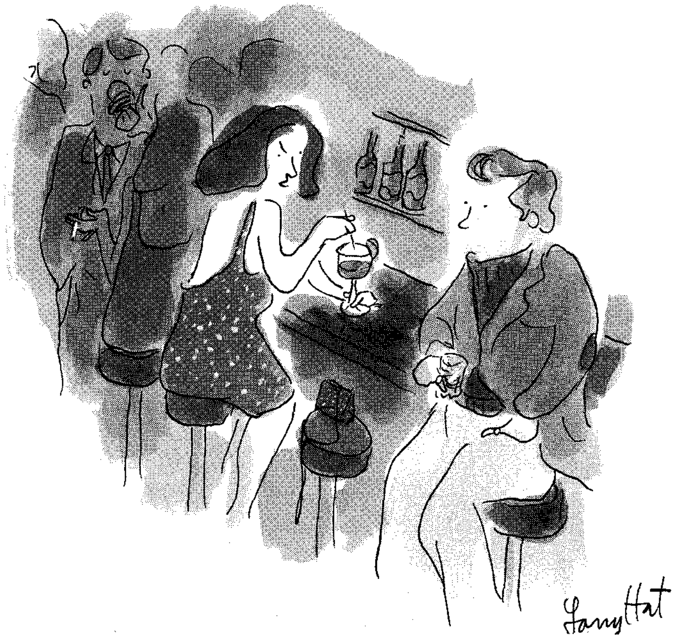
AFTERNOON


She also ate overcooked rice, fruit in season, and organic yogurt.
She had her own "special" toys.
FETCH-O® THE ONLY DOG TOY MADE WITH REINFORCED CONCRETE! IT'S... INDESTRUCTIBLE!
She was very into fetching.
GRRR GRRR SHRED AARGH SHRED SHRED SHRED GRRR TEAR RIP ARRGH RIP RIP RIP TEAR RIP GRRR AARGH
She enjoyed pillows a lot.
Mom? Does Lulu want to make a baby with that pillow?
I never liked that pillow.
The breeder said we should spank her if she was bad, but I wasn't so sure about that.
I never liked *that* pillow, either.
Actually, I don't like any of these pillows.
We were all getting ground down, but who would want to admit such a BIG MISTAKE???
We're out of raw meat. Again.
I'm too tired to brush my teeth. Can I skip?
Sure. whatever.
RICOTTA
I was thinking, Why doesn't your daughter come over to our house to play? I'm sure it'll be a lot safe—I mean, A CHANGE OF PACE!
...IT WAS EMBARRASSING.
At least we were all in agreement: she had to go back to the breeder.
So we swallowed our pride.
Guess what?
We can bring her back tomorrow!
She was just a little too much dog for us.
????

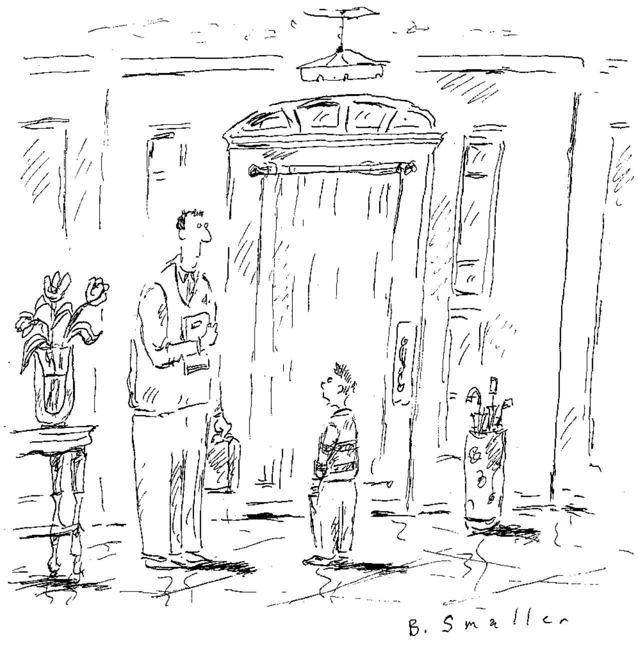
THE FUNNIES



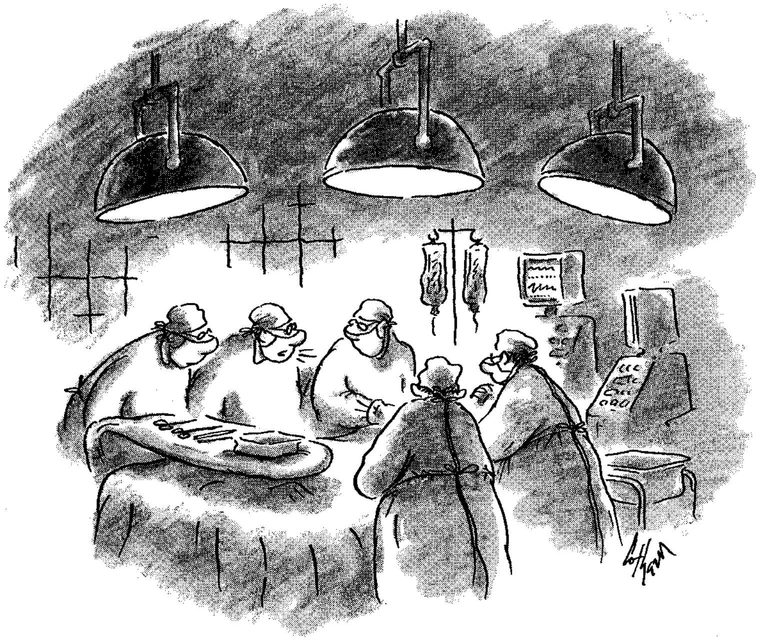
"Him? Oh, he's the guy who owns the car."



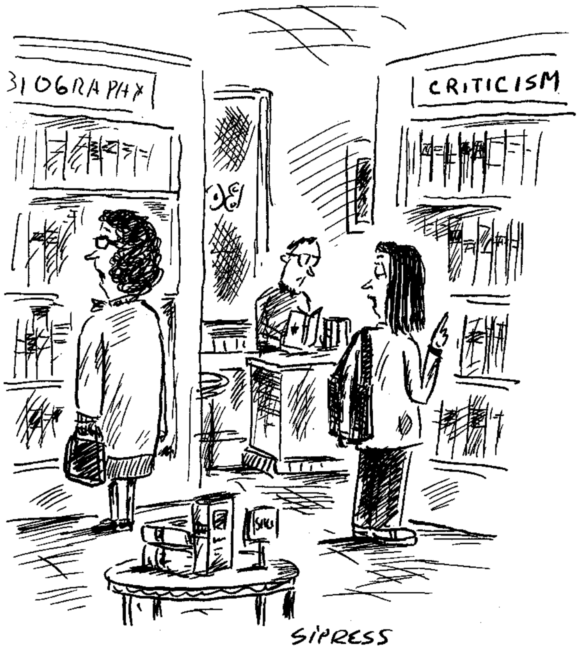
"Maybe you recognize me from the last time I looked familiar."



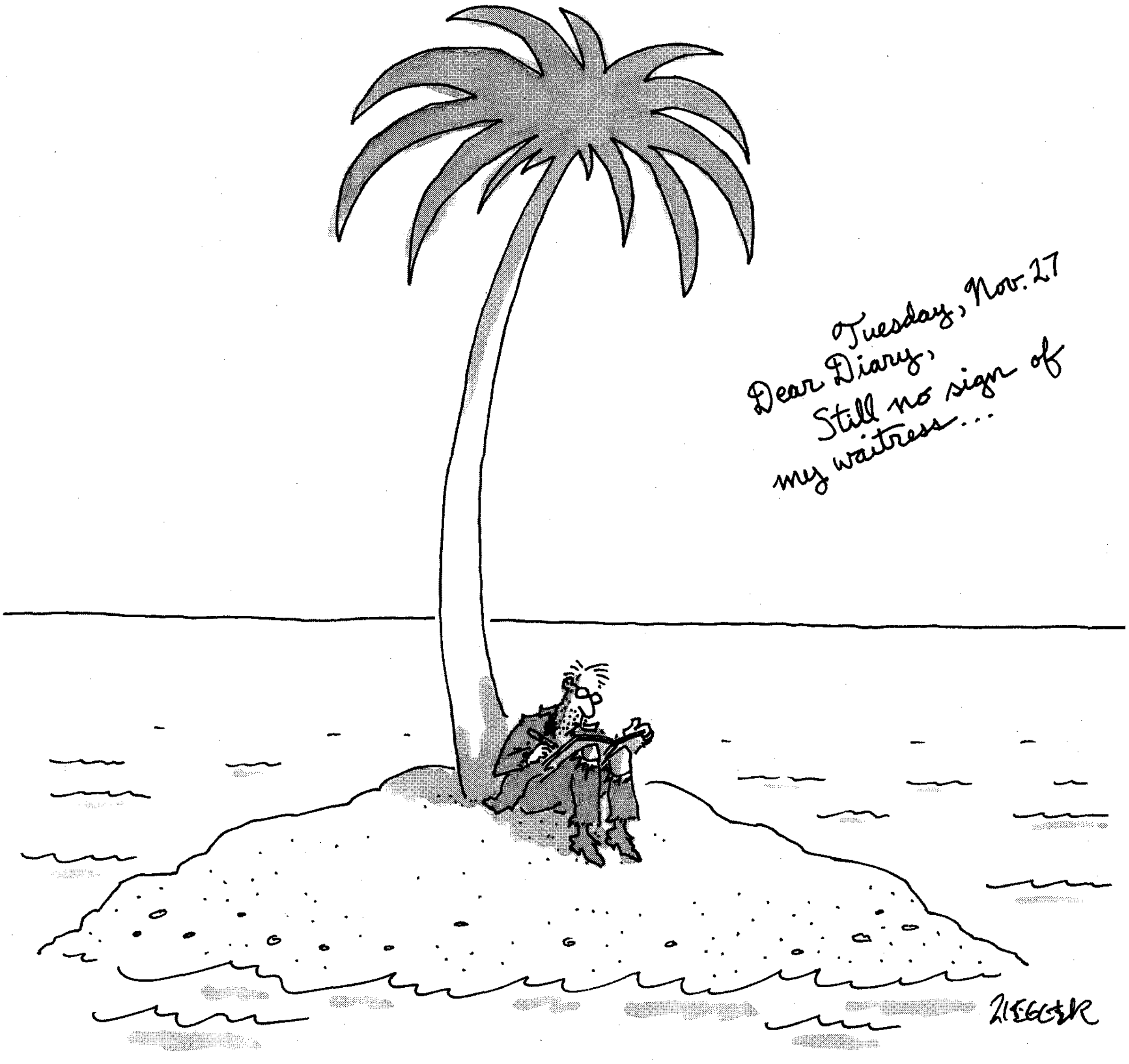
"I'll pay you double what my parents are giving you not to tutor me."

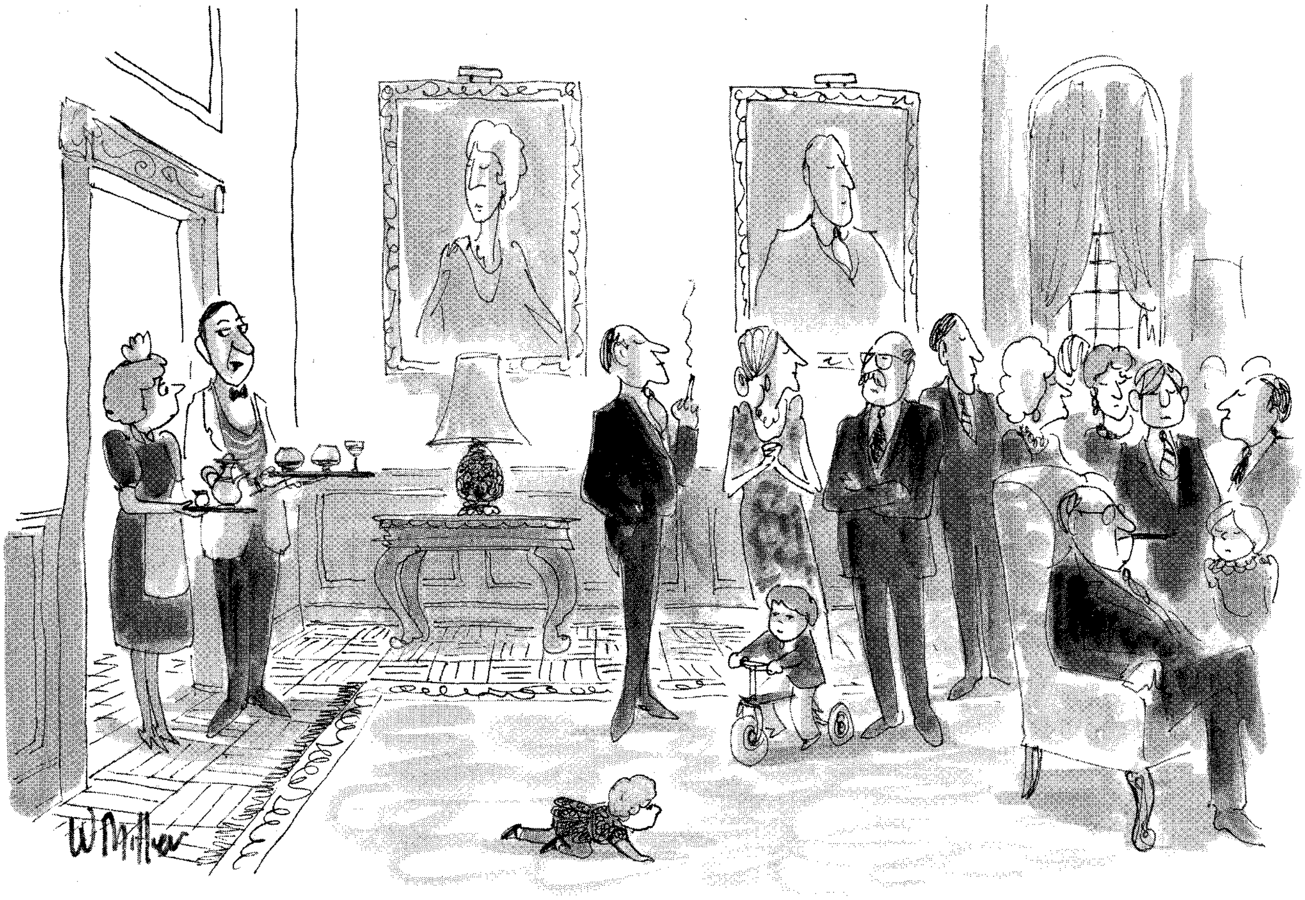


"You're doing it wrong."

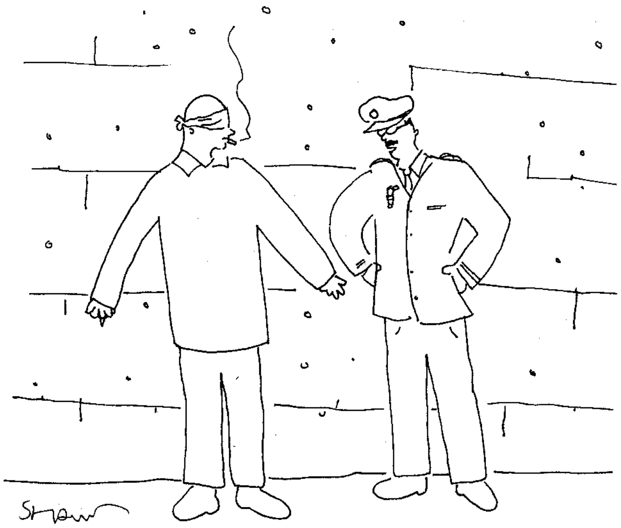

BIOGRAPHY
CRITICISM
SIPRESS

"Look, Mother, this section should interest you."

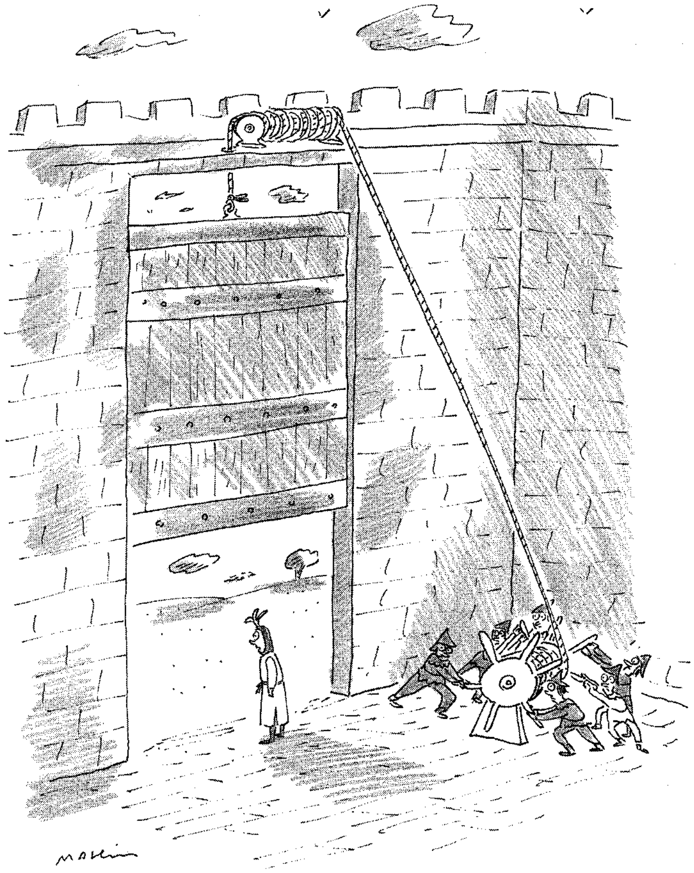

Tuesday, Nov. 27
Dear Diary,
Still no sign of
my waitress...
ZIEGLER



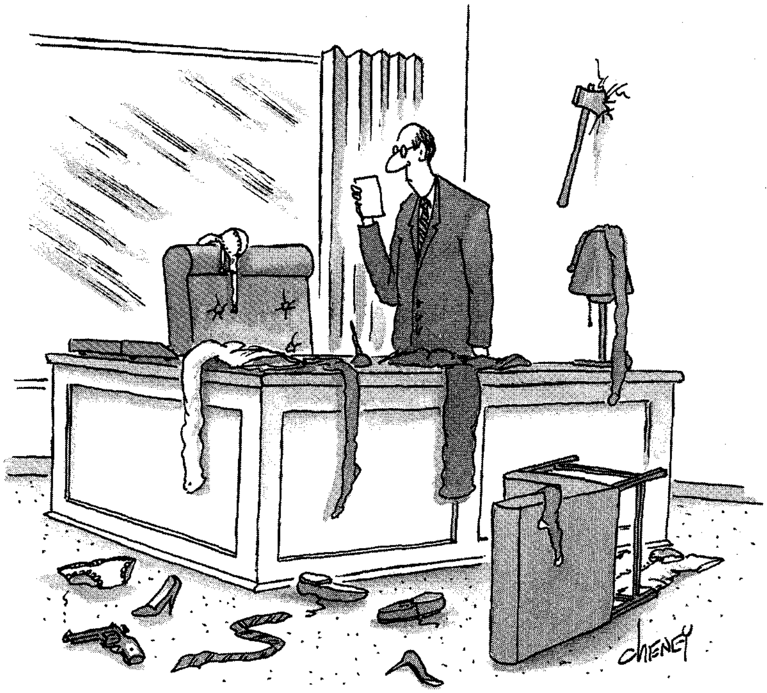
"Actually, it's one giant organism connected by blood, genes, and a common source of old wealth."



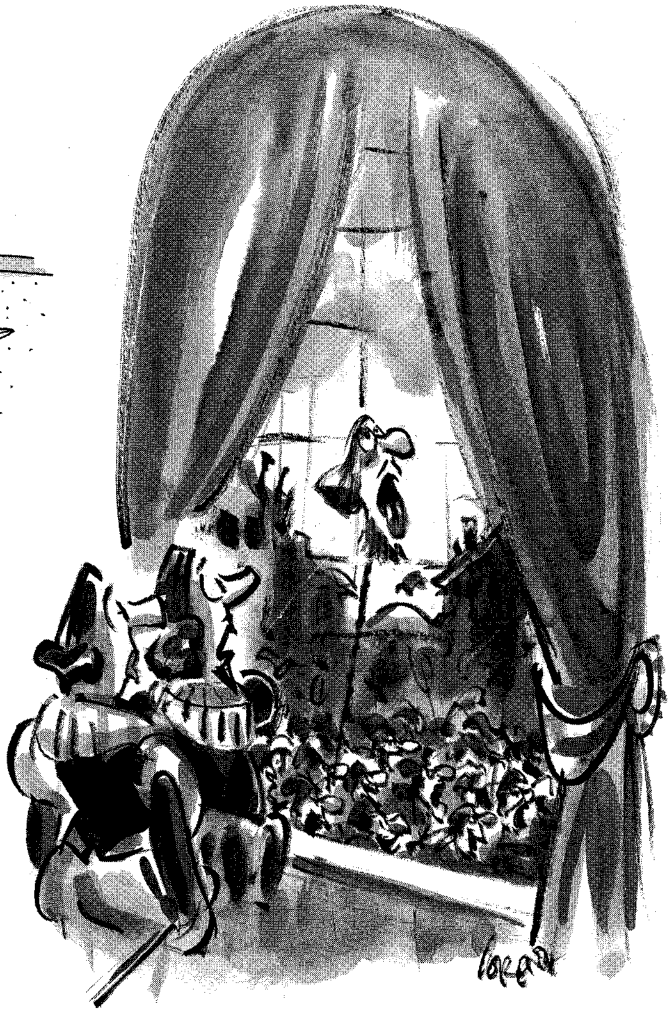
"There's no shooting—we just make you keep smoking."



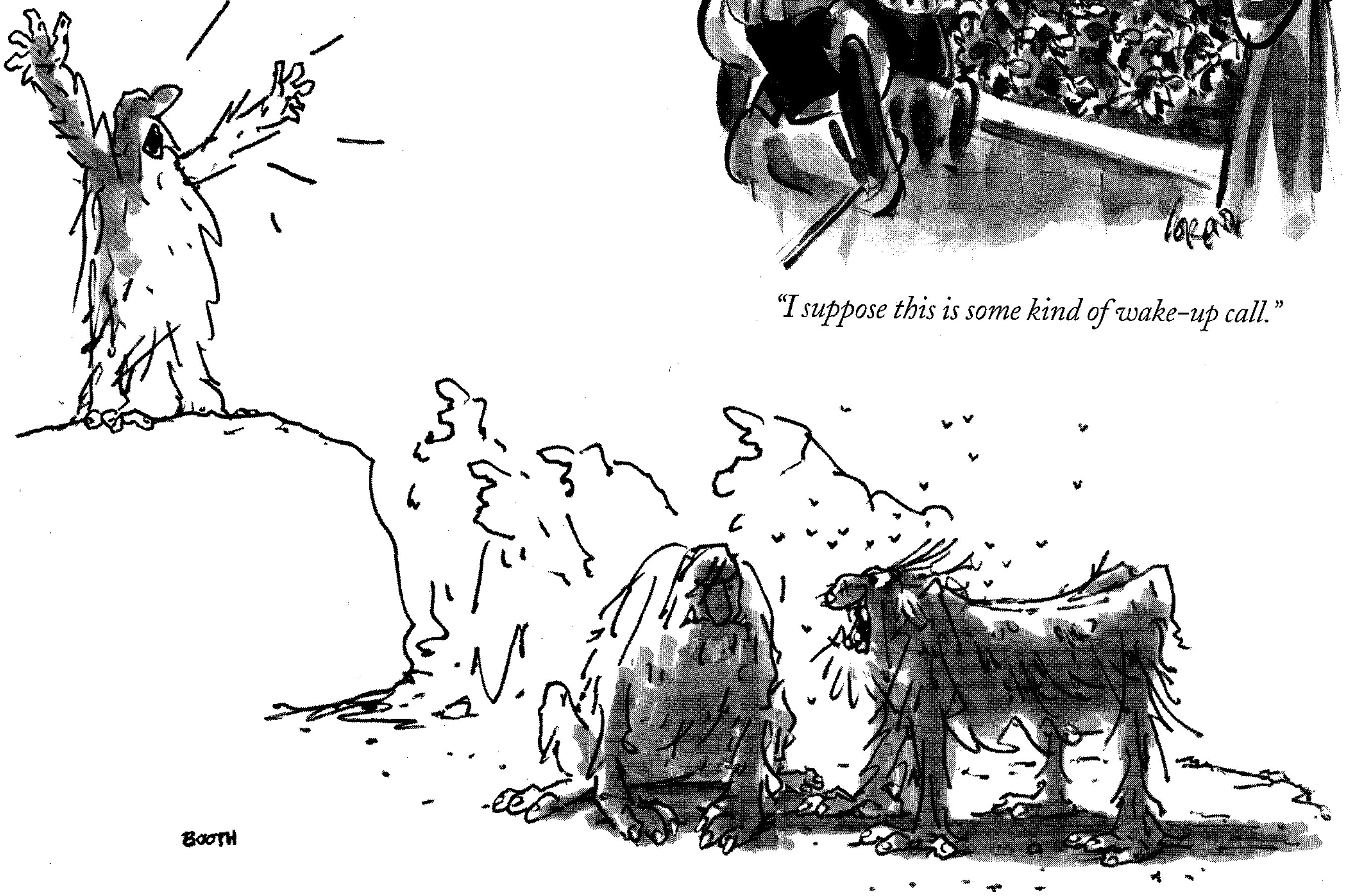
"Gee, that's funny—I thought I heard a knock."



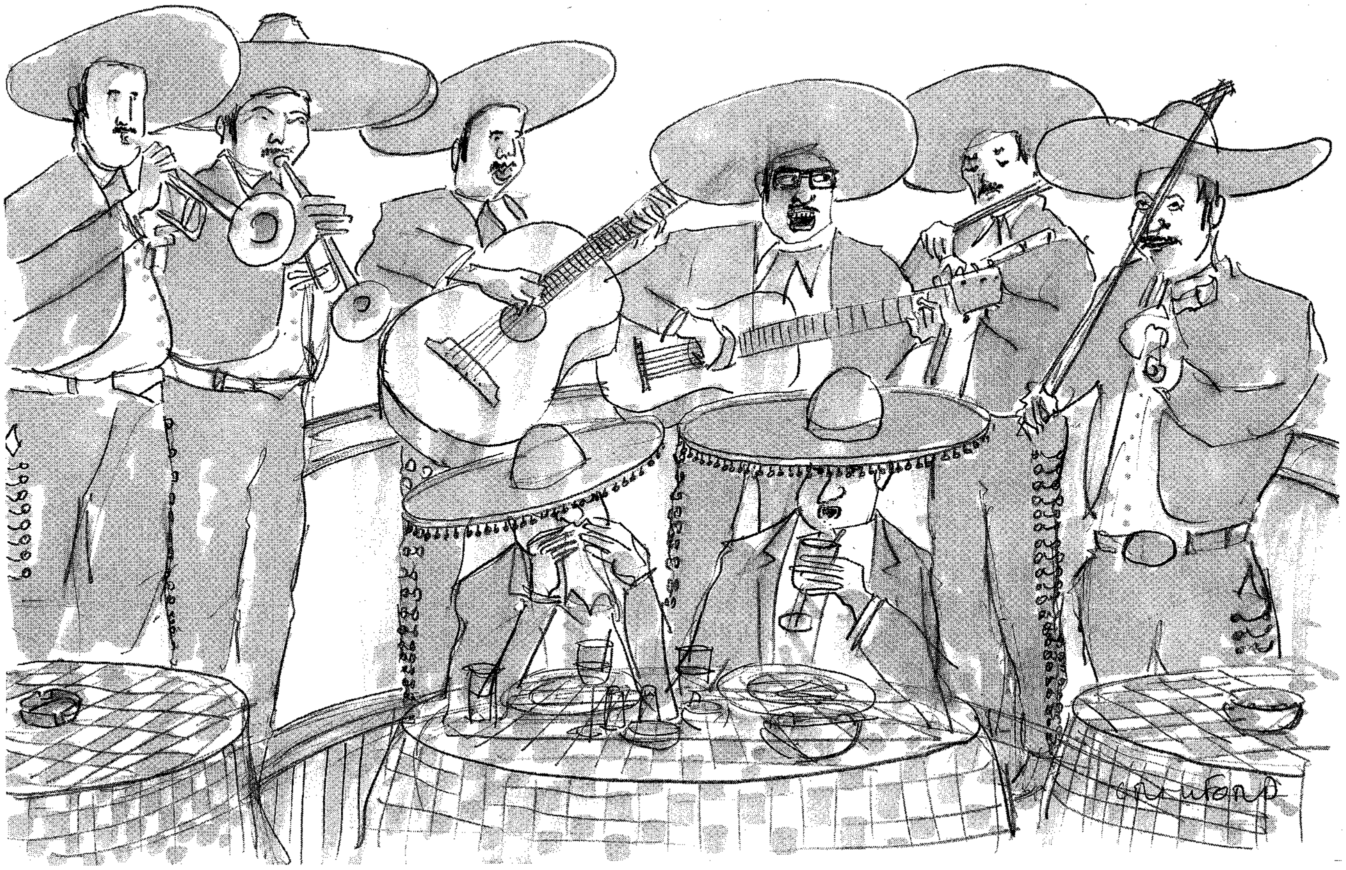
"While You Were Out."



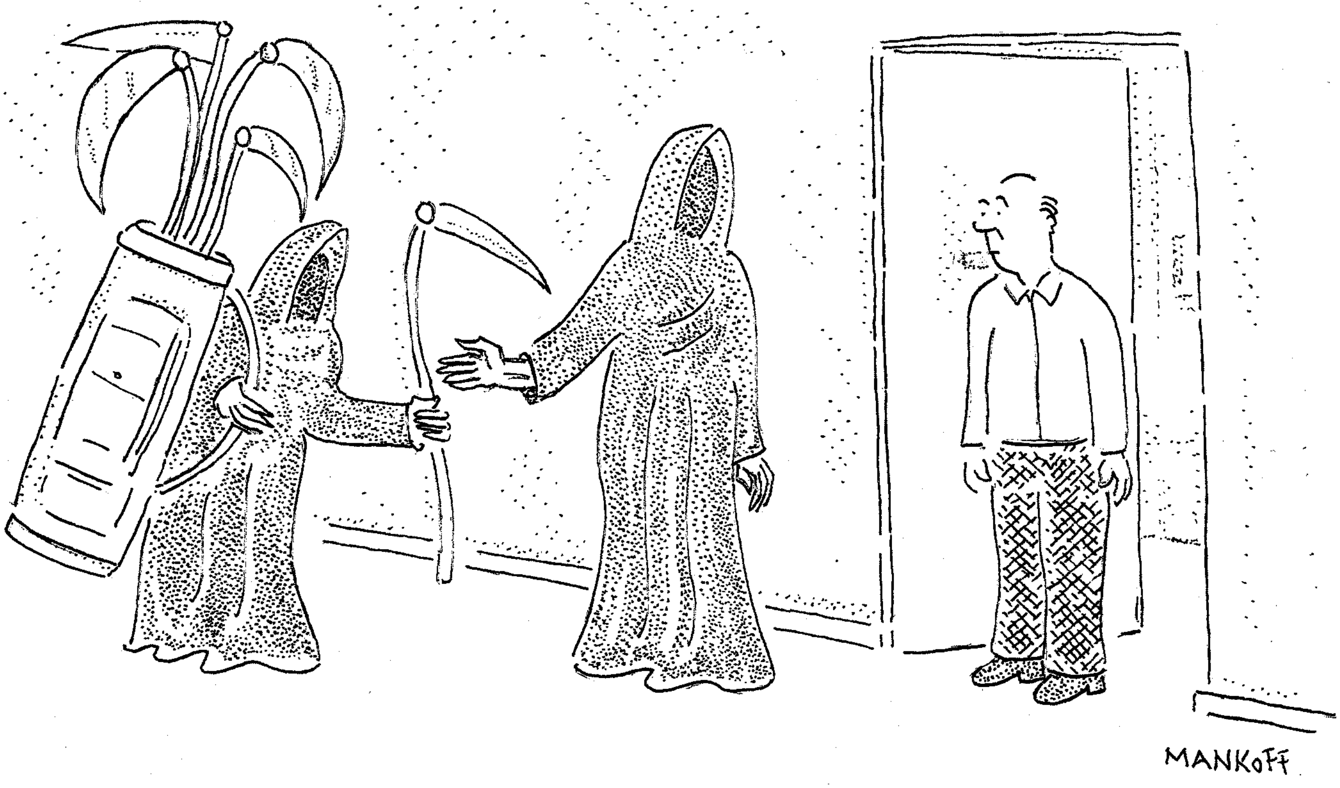
"I suppose this is some kind of wake-up call."

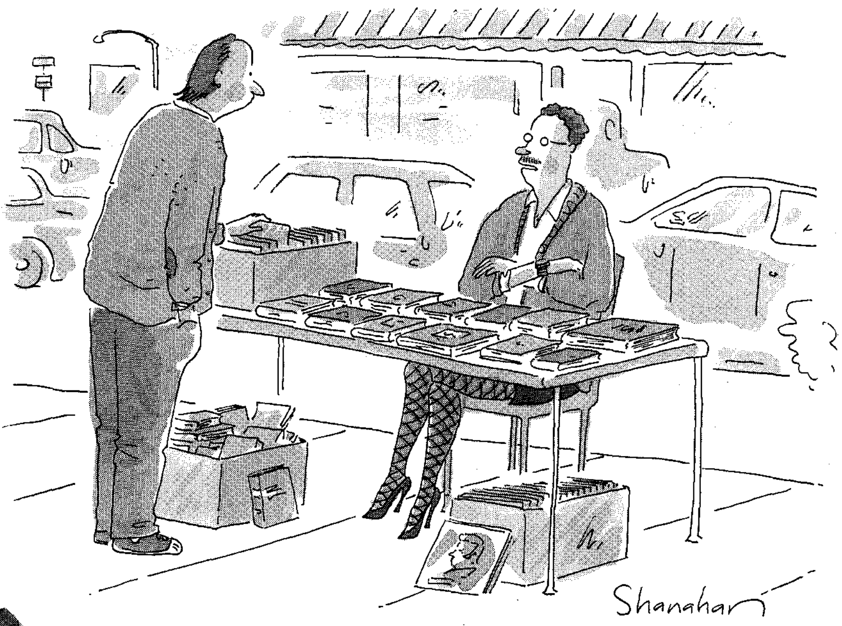


"Dig into his past and find something unseemly."

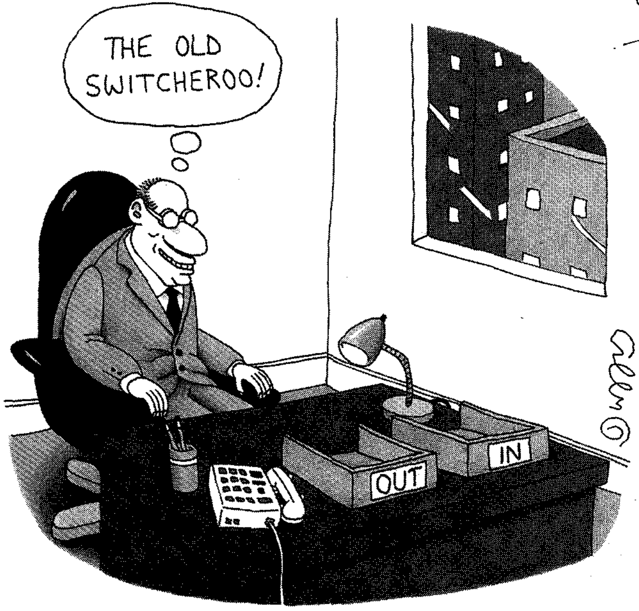


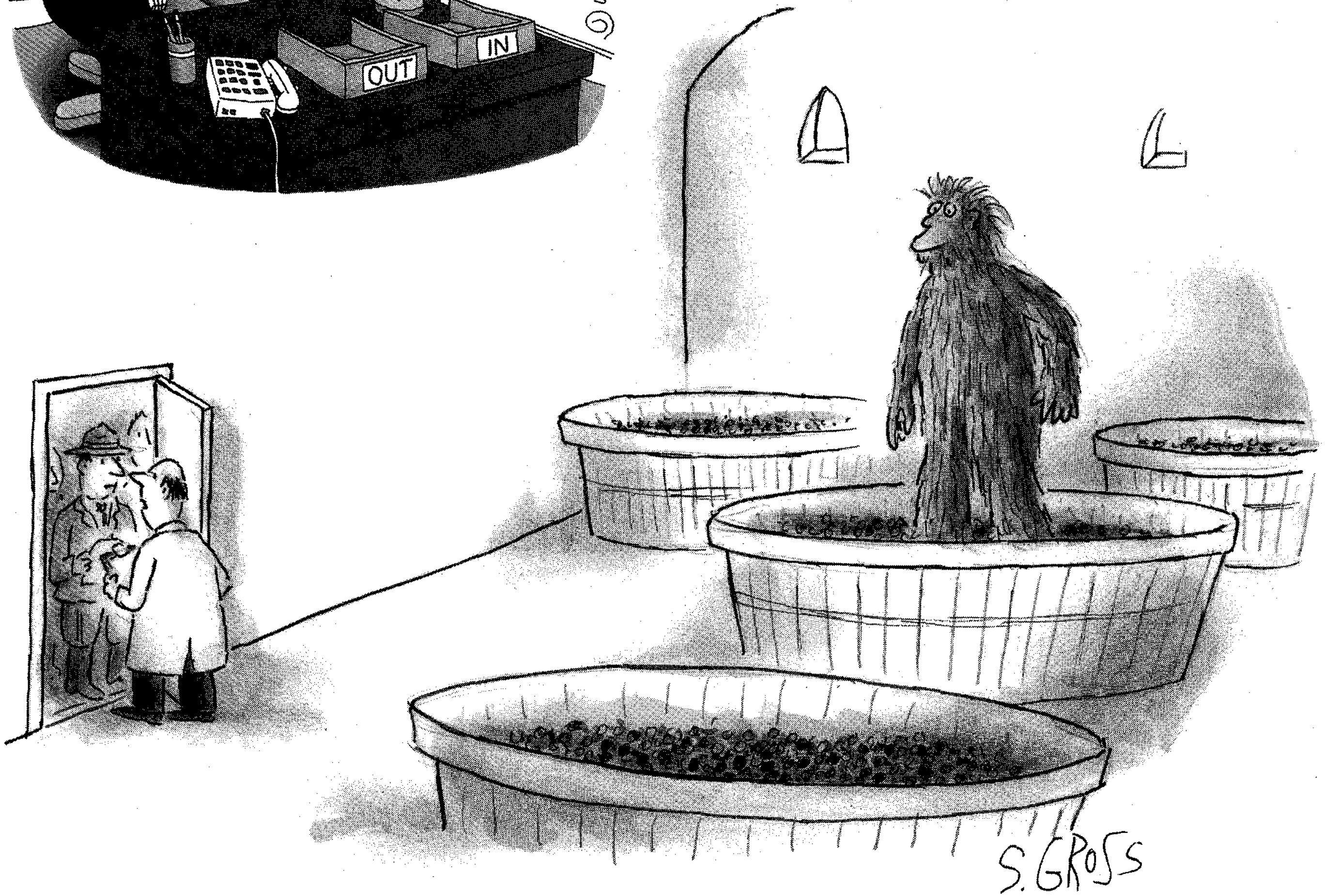
"I don't even know what's funny anymore."





"Lots more interesting stuff under the table."


THE OLD SWITCHEROO!
OUT
IN
Cullum

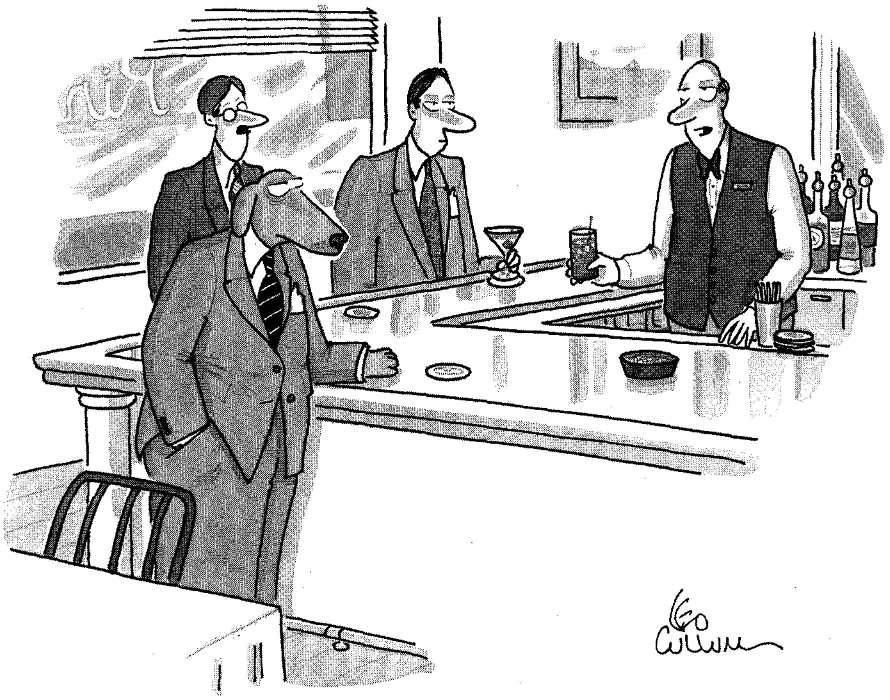


"Bigfoot? Never heard of him."

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?

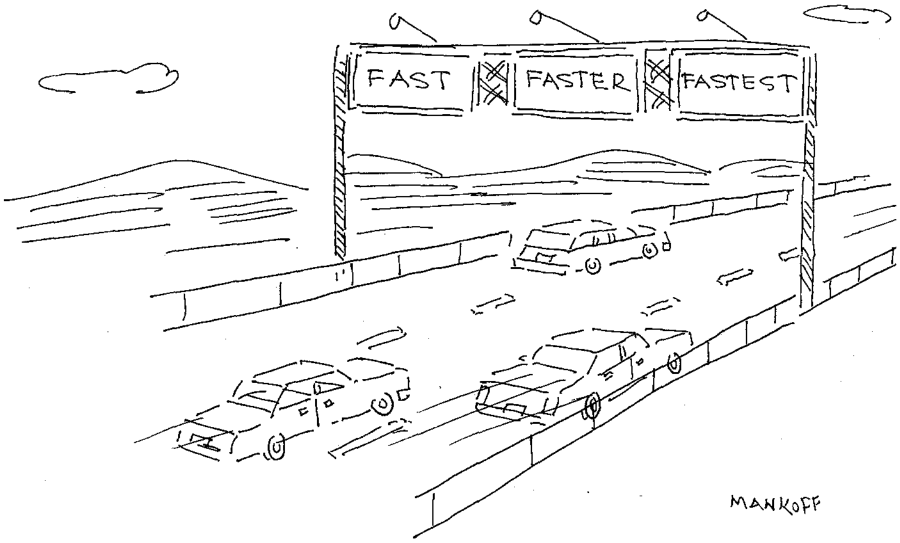
CHECKING CARTOONS

At *The New Yorker*, each article undergoes an exacting fact-checking process: quotes are confirmed, details authenticated, the spellings of names verified, and so forth. This is fairly well known. Less well known, perhaps, is the fact that the magazine subjects its cartoons to the same gruelling procedure. On the face of it, this seems preposterous, since cartoons exist in a world where dogs talk, medieval knights have attorneys, and volcanoes erupt Chinese menus. Take a cartoon from a recent issue, in which three spermatozoa are swimming toward a big round egg; one of the hopeful suitors says to the egg, "Of course you don't look fat." According to experts, sperm can't speak. And then there's the matter of size: in the cartoon, the sperm are about one-tenth as big as the egg; in life, they are about a hundred-thousandth as large. Respecting natural fact while still allowing the sperm to be visible to the naked eye would have required a cartoon panel a mile long. In this case, the magazine's fact checkers let the factual errors pass. However, they have not always been so lenient. In the magazine's long history, hundreds of cartoons have been returned to their creators as a result of mistakes: errors of scale, errors of fact, and even errors of logic that disrupted the consistently illogical cartoon universe. Here are five cartoons flagged by the fact-checking department. Sometimes the cartoonists fixed their mistakes and the cartoons were published. At other times, the diagnosis was a success, but the operation proved fatal to the patient. See if you can play fact checker. Guess what's wrong with these pictures, and which two cartoons never made it into the magazine—until now, of course.



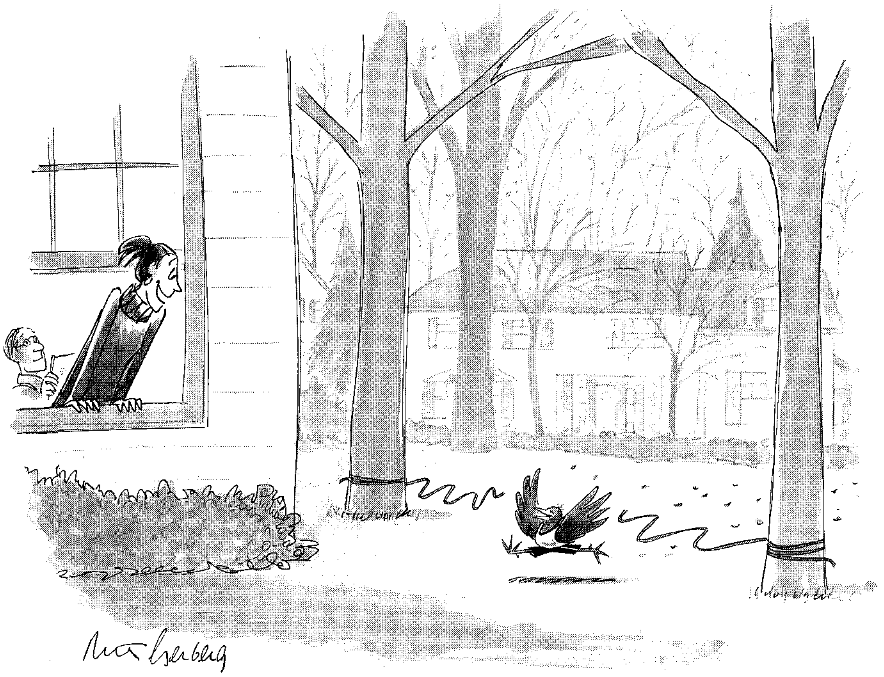
"Scotch and toilet water?"

(1)
A. The buttons on the dog's suit are on the wrong side.
B. Why is the bartender speaking? Wouldn't the joke be simpler if the dog were ordering the drink?
C. The dog and the man in the middle have the same handkerchief in their jacket pockets. Is that man supposed to be the dog's owner?

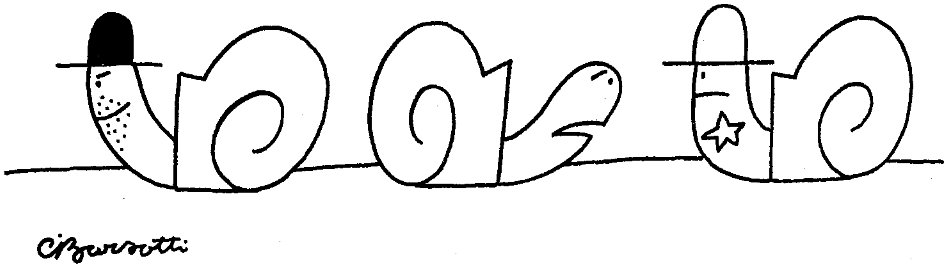


(2)
A. Shouldn't the car in "Fastest" be a sports car?
B. Highway fast lanes are on the left, not the right. Granted, the joke needs to be read from left to right, like the English language, but this contradicts standard highway practice.
C. The station wagon in "Fast" is ahead of the "Faster" and "Fastest" cars.

(3)
A. The bird pictured is much larger than a robin; it is closer in size to a chicken.
B. Why is the bird running? It should be flying.
C. If the bird is in a race, it should have a number on its chest.



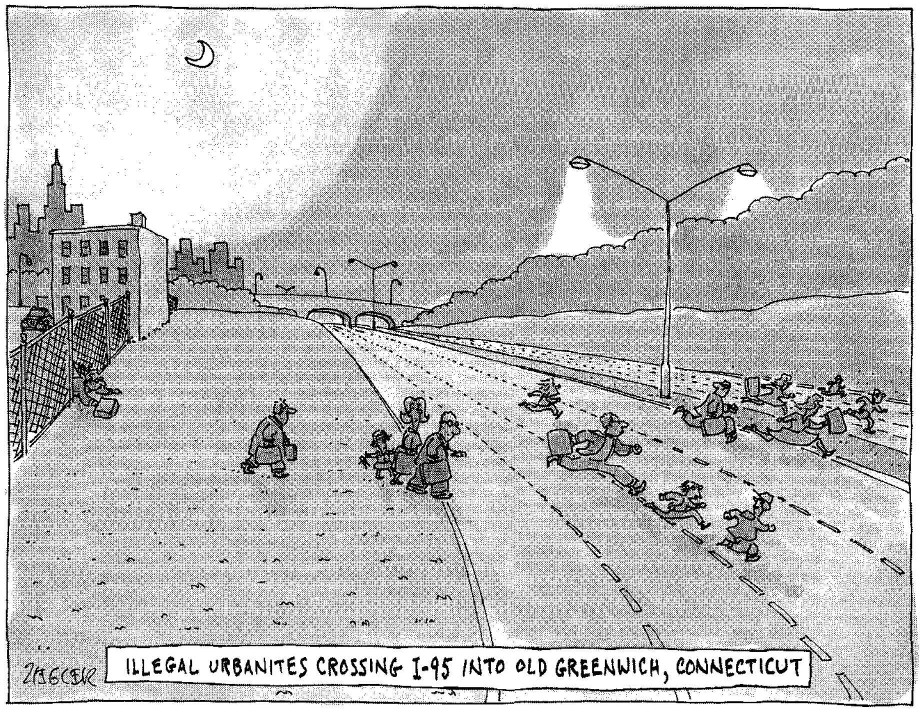
"Oh, Julius, look! It's the first robin."



"He's long gone, sheriff—you'll never catch him."

(4)
A. These aren't snails. They are worms created out of boxing gloves.
B. The snails are wearing derbies, not cowboy hats, as they would in the Old West.
C. Snails' eyes are situated on top of stalks, not on their faces. Technically, snails don't even have faces.

(5)
A. This stretch of I-95 is one of the most heavily trafficked highways in the country. Why no cars at all?
B. To be parallel to "illegal immigrants," the people crossing the highway should be called "illegal suburbanites."
C. I-95 does not separate New York and Connecticut.


ILLEGAL URBANITES CROSSING I-95 INTO OLD GREENWICH, CONNECTICUT

Answers: (1) a, (2) b, (3) a, (4) c, (5) c
Cartoons 2 and 5 were deemed unsalvageable.

OPPOSITE PAGE TOP: CULLUM, 8/11/97; GERBERG, 3/27/00; BARSOTTI, 2/21 & 2/28/00

FICTION

NACHMAN FROM LOS ANGELES

BY LEONARD MICHAELS

If Nachman was given fifteen cents too much in change, he'd walk half a mile back to the newsstand or grocery store to return the money. It was a compulsion—to make things right—that extended to his work in mathematics. He struggled with problems every day. When he solved them, he felt good, and he also felt that he was basically a good man. It was a grandiose sensation, even a mild form of lunacy. But Nachman wasn't smug. He had done something twenty years before, when he was a graduate student at U.C.L.A., that had never felt right and that still tugged at his conscience. The memory of it came to him, virtually moment by moment, when he went to the post office or when he passed a certain kind of dark face in the street. And then Nachman would brood on what had happened.

It had begun when Nachman saw two men standing in front of the library on the U.C.L.A. campus. One was his friend Norbert, who had phoned the night before to make a date for coffee. Norbert hadn't mentioned that he was bringing someone, so Nachman was unprepared for the other man, a stranger. He had black hair and black eyes, a finely shaped nose, and a wide sensuous mouth. A Middle Eastern face, aristocratically handsome. Better-looking than a movie star, Nachman thought, but he felt no desire to meet him, only annoyance. Norbert should have warned Nachman, given him the chance to say yes or no. Nachman would have said no. He had the beginning of a cold sore in the middle of his upper lip. Nachman wasn't normally vain, but the stranger was not merely handsome. He was perfect. Comparisons are invidious, Nachman thought, but that doesn't make them wrong. Compared with the stranger, Nachman was a gargoyle.

"Nachman, this is Prince Ali Massid from Persia," Norbert said, as if introducing the Prince to a large audience and somehow congratulating himself at the same time. "The Prince has a problem. I told him you could help and I mentioned your fee, which I said is in the neighborhood of a thousand bucks."

Nachman assumed that Norbert was joking, but the Prince wasn't smiling. With modest restraint, the Prince said, "Norbert thinks of me as an exotic fellow. He tells people I am from Persia or Jordan or Bahrain. I've lived mainly in Switzerland. I went to school in Zurich, where there were a dozen princes among my classmates. I have noble relations, but in America I am like everyone else. My name is Ali. How do you do, Nachman? It is a pleasure to meet you."

Nachman said, "Oh?"

The little word, "Oh," seemed embarrassing to Nachman. What did he mean by "Oh"? He added, "How do you do? I'm Nachman from Los Angeles."

Norbert said, "What is this, the U.N.? Switzerland, Persia, Jordan—who cares? Ali's problem is about a term paper. He'll explain it to you."

Norbert walked away, abandoning Nachman and Ali. Nachman grinned at Ali and shrugged, a gesture both sheepish and ingratiating. "I don't always know when Norbert is joking. I thought I was meeting him for coffee. He didn't mention anything else."

"I understand. Norbert was indiscreet. He is like a person at a séance who speaks beyond himself. He has no idea how these things are done."

What things? Nachman wondered.

Ali smiled in a knowing manner, and yet he seemed uncertain. The smile flashed and, before it was fully formed, vanished. "Norbert is in my city-planning class, and we talk about this and that. The other day, I mentioned my problem, you see, and Norbert said that he had a friend who could write papers. He insisted that I meet his friend. So here I am—you know what I mean?—and here you are. I want to ask you to write a paper, you see."

"I see."

"I cannot write well, and I have done badly in one class, which is called Metaphysics. I should never have taken this class. I imagined it had to do with mysticism. Please don't laugh."

"Who's laughing?"

"It happens that this class has nothing to do with mysticism, only with great thinkers in metaphysics. I am not interested in metaphysics, you see."

Ali nodded his beautiful head as though he were saying yes, yes, providing a gentle obbligato to his soft voice, and his hands made small gestures, waving about and chasing each other in circles. It was distracting. Nachman wanted to say, "Stop doing that. Talk with your mouth." Only Ali's eyes remained still, holding Nachman's eyes persistently, intimately.

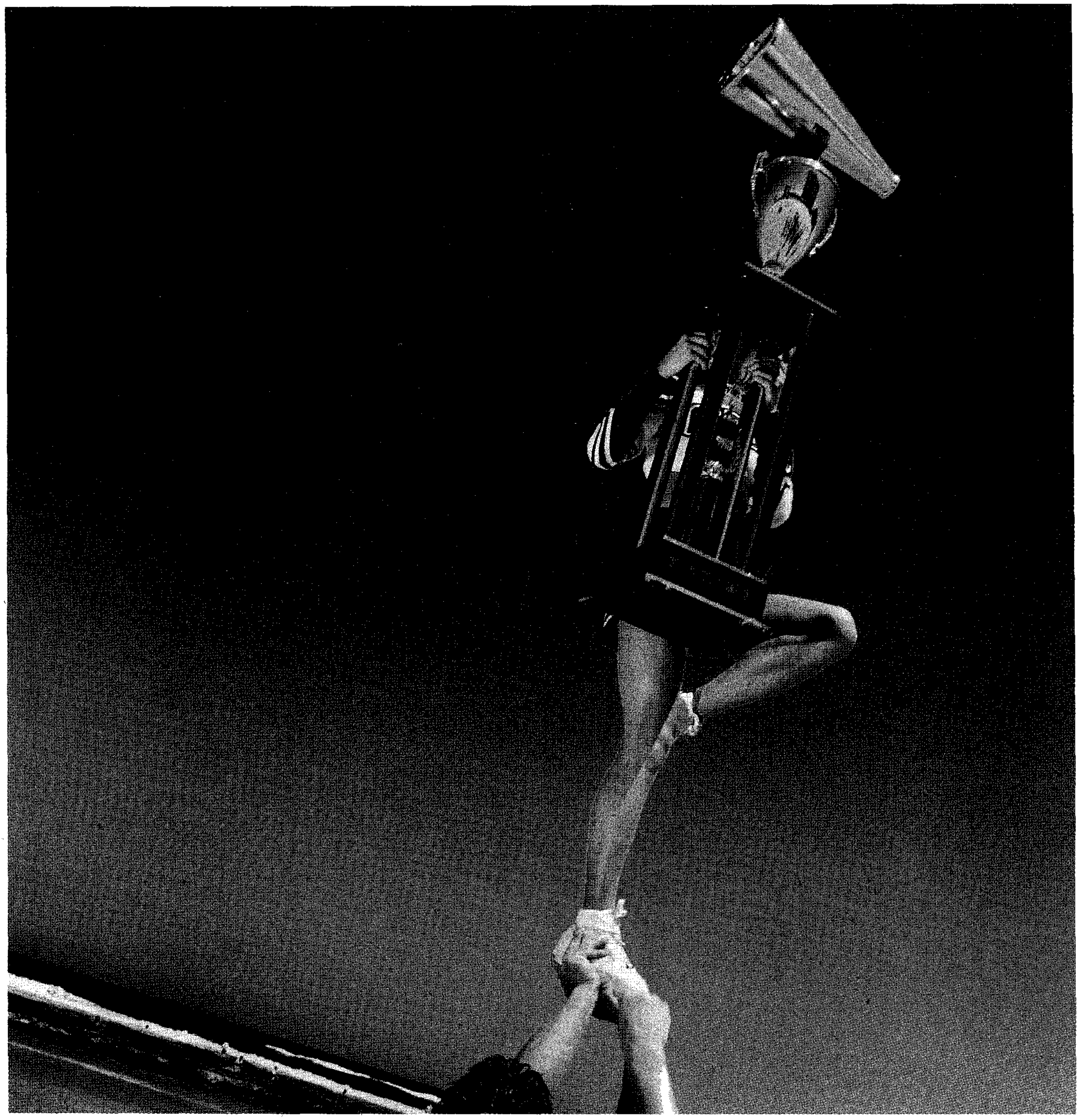
"But I don't write well about anything, not even about mysticism, you see, and I have no desire to try to write about metaphysics."

"Why don't you drop the class?"

"Good question. I should drop the class, but it's now too late. I was hoping the professor would eventually talk about mysticism. There are people, you know, who talk and talk and never come to the point. The professor is a decent man and he is doing his best, but if I fail I won't graduate. This would ruin my plans for work and travel. Your friend Norbert said that you would be sympathetic. He said that you could write about metaphysics."

"I don't know anything about metaphysics. I don't even know what it is. I'm a student in mathematics."

"Norbert said that you could write about anything. He was sincere."



BRIAN FINKE

Ali sounded as if he were sliding backward down a hill he had just struggled to climb. Nachman felt sympathy, because of Ali's looks, but also because he seemed to engage Nachman personally. It wasn't strictly correct to write a paper for someone, but Nachman already knew that he was willing to try.

"I'm sure Norbert was sincere," Nachman said. "Norbert wants to start a paper-writing business. Did he tell you that?"

"No. But I applaud this idea. Many students need papers. You will be partners with Norbert?"

"I never said that, but you have to let a friend talk. Talking is Norbert's way of life. He is always broke, but he doesn't think about getting a job. He schemes day and night. And he dollars me. You know the expression? 'Nachman, lend me a dollar.' He never pays me back. He had the idea about the paper-writing business. I don't need the money. I have a scholarship that covers books and living expenses."

"Even so, you must go into business with Norbert. Because of your friendship. Norbert loves you, and he had a splendid idea. Norbert brings you poor students like me, and you write the papers. He gets a percentage and soon he will owe you nothing. Will you do it? A thousand dollars."

"It's not a question of money. If I write a paper, it will be a good paper."

"So you will help me?"

"What was the assignment? Let me think about it."

"I need a paper on the metaphysics of Henri Bergson. About twenty pages. It's due in three weeks."

"Bergson writes about memory, doesn't he?"

"See, Nachman, you already know

what to write. If a thousand dollars isn't enough, I'll pay more. Will you do it?"

"I don't know."

"Don't know if you will do it? Or if a thousand isn't enough?"

"One, I don't know. Two, I also don't know. The money is Norbert's department. Talk to him about the money."

"So we have a deal?"

With a fantastic white smile on his dark face, Ali put forth his hand. Reflexively, Nachman accepted it. A line had been crossed. Nachman hadn't noticed when he crossed it. Maybe Ali had moved the line so that, to Nachman's surprise, it now lay behind rather than in front of him. Ali's expression was deeply studious, as if he were reading Nachman's heart and finding reciprocity there, a flow of sympathy equivalent to his need. For Nachman the reciprocity was too rich in feeling and too poor in common sense. He felt set up, manipulated. But he'd shaken hands.

"I'll phone you," Ali said. He nodded goodbye. Nachman nodded, too, and walked into the library, went to the card catalogue, and pulled out a drawer. He found cards with the name Henri Bergson printed on them, and he copied the titles of several books onto call slips.

Nachman's apartment was in the basement of a house in the Hollywood Hills, near Highland Avenue. It had a bedroom and a living room, a tiny kitchen, and low ceilings. It was cramped, but not unpleasant. The windows, approximately at ground level, looked down a steep hillside to a narrow winding street. Nachman could see ice plants, cacti, rosebushes, and pine trees.

Sitting at the kitchen table, he picked up a book by Henri Bergson. According to the jacket, Bergson had won a Nobel Prize in Literature and had influenced the intellectual and spiritual life of the modern age. He was a French Jew who had intended to convert to Catholicism, but when the Nazis began rounding up Jews he decided not to convert. His story was heartbreaking, but irrelevant to Nachman from Los Angeles. To Nachman religious institutions were frightening. He believed, so to speak, in mathematics.

That evening, when the phone rang, Nachman picked it up and shouted, "Norbert, are you out of your mind?"

"A thousand dollars, Nachman."

"Ali wants me to write a paper about Henri Bergson."

"Who is Henri Bergson?"

"You wouldn't be interested and I don't want to talk about him. If you think writing a paper is easy, you do it."

"Nachman, I once tried to keep a diary. What could be easier? Little girls keep diaries. Every night I opened my diary and I wrote 'Dear Diary.' The next thing I wrote was 'Good night.' Nothing comes to me. I'm a talker. Believe me, Nachman, I can talk with the best, but I can't write."

"What does that have to do with me, Norbert? You did a number on me."

"Come on, man. A thousand dollars. We'll take a trip to Baja, hang out on the beach. It'll be great."

Norbert's voice had a wheedling, begging tone. It was irritating, but Nachman forgave him. He knew that his friend needed money. Norbert carried books and went to classes, but wasn't a registered student because he couldn't pay his fees. Norbert's father refused to help. He'd been alienated when Norbert got a small tattoo on the side of his neck. Norbert's father, an eminent doctor, considered tattoos low class. Norbert still lived at home in Beverly Hills and drove one of the family cars, a Mercedes convertible. He paid for gas with his mother's credit card. But until the tattoo was removed he would receive no money. Now he wandered about campus with his tattoo. He didn't want to look for a job. He felt he could survive in an original manner. He had business ideas.

"I don't know anything about metaphysics," Nachman said.

"What do you have to know? It's all in a book. You read the book and copy out sentences and make up some bullshit. *Finito.* That's a paper. Do me a favor, Nachman. Look at a couple of books. Flip through the pages and you'll know all you need."

"I've been reading for hours."

"That's good, that's good."

"Norbert, have you ever read a book?"

"Ali told me you promised. He is very happy."

"I said I'd try. It's not for the money, and not because I want to go to Baja and hang out on a beach."

"I understand."

"I'm doing it because I like Ali. He's a nice guy."

"I feel the same way about him."

"After this, no more. I'll do this one time."

"You're O.K., Nachman."

"You're an idiot, Norbert."

"I'm glad you feel that way. But don't get too sentimental about Ali and forget the money part. Ali is very rich, you know. I would write a paper for Ali every day, but I can't write. You should see Ali's girlfriend, by the way. Georgia Sweeny. You ever go to football games? She's a cheerleader. An incredible piece. I'd let her sit on my face, man."

Nachman hung up.

Norbert was shockingly vulgar. Nachman almost changed his mind about writing the paper, but then he remembered the look in Ali's eyes. It had had nothing to do with the cheerleader or with being rich. Nachman's resentment faded. He went back to the books and read through the night.

For the next three days, he did none of his own work. He read Henri Bergson.

At the end of the week, Ali phoned.

"How are you, Nachman?"

"O.K."

"That's wonderful news. Have you given some thought to the paper?"

"I've been reading."

"What do you mean, reading?"

"I can't just start to write. I'm in math. It's not like philosophy. Math you do. Philosophy you speculate. Did you ever hear of Galois? He was a great mathematician. He fought a duel. The night before the duel, he went to his room and did math, because he might be killed in the duel and not have another chance."

"Was he killed?"

"Yes."

"What a pity. Well, I agree completely. You must read and speculate. But is it coming along?"

"Don't worry."

"I'm sorry if I sound worried. I am confident that you will write the paper. A good paper, too. Do you mind if I phone now and then?"

"Phone anytime," Nachman said.

He liked Ali's voice—the way feelings came first and sense followed modestly behind. It was consistent with Ali's looks. Nachman wanted to ask, jokingly, if Ali had a sister, but of course he couldn't without embarrassing both Ali and himself.

"Can I invite you to dinner?" Ali asked. "You can't speculate all the time. It will give us a chance to talk."

"Sure. Next week."

Nachman went back to the reading.

Metaphysics was words. Nachman had nothing against words, but, as a mathematician, he kept trying to read through the words to the concepts. After a while, he believed he understood a little. Bergson raised problems about indeterminate realities. He then offered solutions that seemed determinate. Mathematicians did that, too, but they worked with mathematical objects, not messy speculations and feelings about experience. But then—My God, Nachman thought—metaphysics was something like calculus. Bergson himself didn't have much respect for mathematics. He thought it was a limited form of intelligence, a way of asserting sovereignty over the material world, but still, to Nachman's mind, Bergson was a kind of mathematician. He worked with words instead of equations, and arrived at an impressionistic calculus. It was inexact—the opposite of mathematics—but Bergson was a terrific writer; his writing was musical, not right, not wrong, just beautiful and strangely convincing.

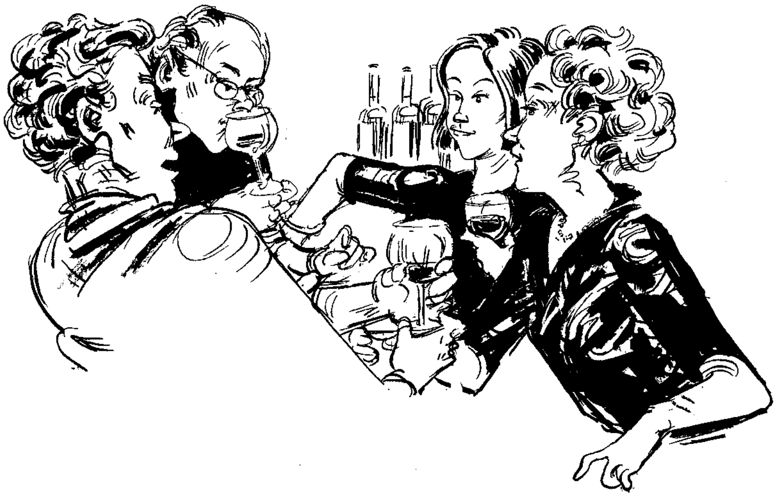
By Monday of the second week, Nachman had read enough. He would reread, and then start writing. He would show that Bergson's calculus was built into the rhythm and flow of his sentences. Like music, it was full of proposals and approximations, and it accumulated meaning, which it built into crescendos of truth.

Ali phoned.

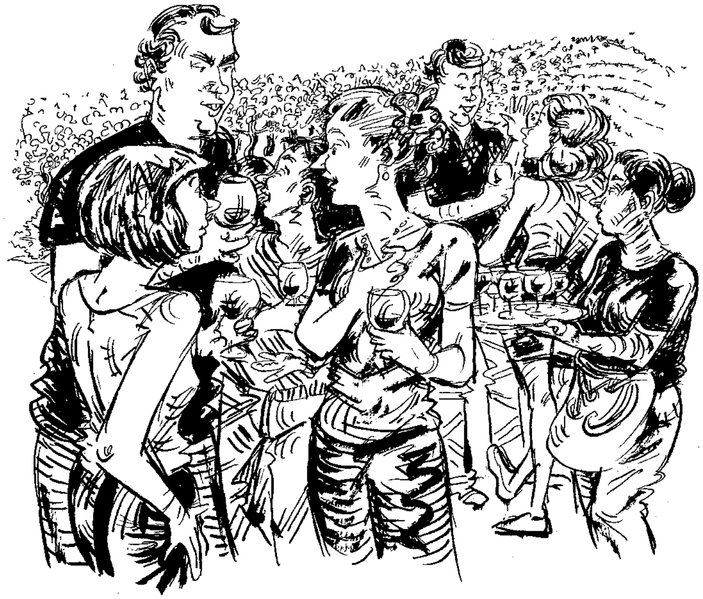
Nachman said, "No, I haven't started, but I know what I'm going to say. I love this stuff. I'm glad I read it. Bergson is going to change my life."

"I'm glad to hear that. You are marvellous, Nachman. I think the writing will go quickly. Perhaps you will be finished by tomorrow, almost two weeks

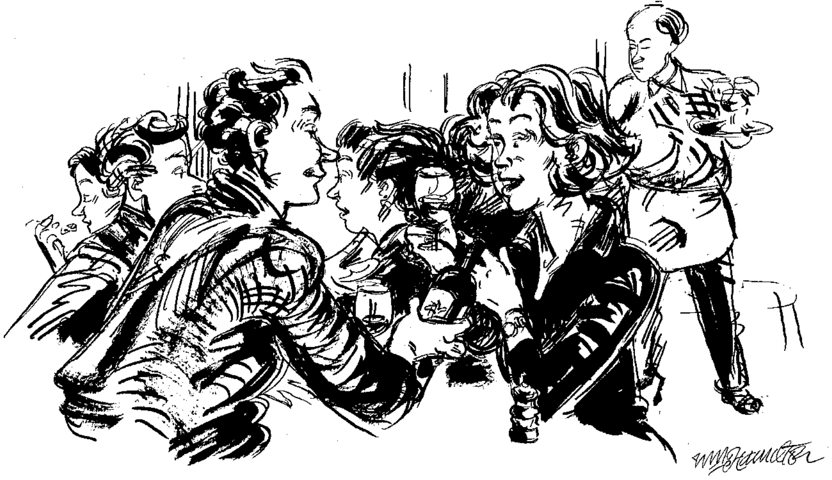
WINE COUNTRY BY WILLIAM HAMILTON



"Typical trust-fund red from a vanity vintner."



"Bob's family has been here since 1948, which, where you guys come from, in France, is, like, the equivalent of five hundred years."



"Oh, my God! You mean this is you?"

RETIRE
[To the Southern Part of Heaven]

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ahead of time. I never doubted that you would do it."

Ali's faith in Nachman was obviously phony. He was begging Nachman to start. Despite his assertions, Ali lacked confidence. More troubling was Ali's indifference to Nachman's enthusiasm. That he didn't care about metaphysics was all right, but he also didn't care that Nachman cared. Nachman's feelings were slightly hurt.

"It's only been a week, Ali. Tomorrow is too soon. I still have two weeks to write the paper. I could tell you what I'll say. Do you want to hear?"

"I am eager to hear what you will say. So we must have dinner. The telephone is inappropriate. At dinner you can tell me, and I can ask questions. How about tonight? We will eat and talk."

"I'm busy. I have my own classes to think about. My work."

Surprised by his own reproachful tone—was he objecting to a dinner invitation?—Nachman tried to undo its effect. "Tomorrow night, Ali. Would that be good for you?"

"Not only good, it will be a joy. I will pick you up. I have in mind dinner at Chez Monsieur. The one in Brentwood, of course, not Hollywood."

"I've never heard of Chez Monsieur in Brentwood or Hollywood. But no restaurant music. I can't talk if I have to hear restaurant music." Nachman sighed. He was being a critical beast. Couldn't he speak in a neutral way? "Oh, you decide, Ali. If you like restaurant music, I'll live with it."

"I'll tell the maître d' there must be no music. Also no people at tables near ours."

"Do you own the place?"

"Tomorrow night I will own the place. Have no fear. We will be able to converse. When I make the reservation, I will also discuss our meal with the maître d', so we will not have to talk to a waiter. What would you like, Nachman? I can recommend certain soups, and either fowl or fish. Chez Monsieur has never disappointed me in these categories. I don't want to risk ordering meat dishes. I've heard them praised many times by my relatives, but, personally, I'd rather not experiment."

"Ali, please order anything you like."

"But this is for you, not me. I want you to enjoy the meal."

Ali's solicitousness made Nachman uncomfortable. He wasn't used to being treated with such concern. "I'll trust your judgment."

"And the wine?"

"The wine?"

"You would like me to decide on the wine?"

"If they run out of wine, I'll settle for orange soda."

"Orange soda. That's very funny. I'll come for you at eight. Give me your address."

Promptly at eight, Nachman stood outside the house. The limousine appeared one minute later. A door opened. Nachman saw that Ali was wearing a dinner jacket. Nachman was wearing his old gray tweed jacket, jeans, and a white shirt open at the collar. He hadn't been able to find his tie. In jacket, shirt, jeans, and no tie, Nachman climbed into the limousine.

Ali greeted him in a jolly spirit. "As you see, Nachman, I'm incapable of defying convention," he said. "Not even in California, where defiance is the convention. I must tell you a story. It will make you laugh."

There was no uncertain smile. There was nothing apologetic or needy in his manner. The limousine went sliding down Highland Avenue into the thrill of the city's billion lights, and Ali talked cheerily. Nachman sank into the embrace of soft gray leather and studied the back of the driver's head. The limousine smelled good. It seemed to fly. Tinted windows made Nachman invisible to the street. Such privilege and sensuous pleasure. He felt suspicious of it, as if he were being made to believe that he liked something he didn't like and could never have.

Ali said, "One evening not long ago—this was after I came to America—when I first started to go out with

Sweeny . . . Have I told you about Sweeny?"

"No."

"She is my girlfriend. Do you go to football games? You would know who she is."

"She plays football?"

Ali paused. He lost his storytelling momentum and seemed to sneer faintly, but the expression quickly changed, became a smile.

"Sweeny is a cheerleader."

Nachman had been unable to resist the joke. The limousine, Ali's dinner jacket, and Nachman's embarrassment at his inappropriate attire had made him feel—yes, he named it—like a jerk. Hence he became a comedian, keeping his dignity by sacrificing it.

"As I was saying, Nachman, I picked Sweeny up at her apartment and I arrived wearing jeans. She shrieked. Why is Sweeny shrieking? I asked myself. It was because my jeans had been ironed, you see. I laughed. I was being a good sport, laughing at myself. In my heart, I was bitterly ashamed. When she stopped shrieking, Sweeny was able to explain. Ironed jeans, you see, are horrifying. An American would know this, but I had just arrived and I had never before worn jeans. Naturally, I had had them ironed. Can you imagine my shame?"

Ali wanted to make Nachman feel that his outfit was all right, and Nachman appreciated Ali's intention, but the word "shame" was telling. Ali thought Nachman looked shameful.

The limousine stopped in front of a white stucco building. There was no sign, no window, no doorman. Ali led Nachman through an ordinary wooden door, and *voilà*, Chez Monsieur, a restaurant for those in the know. It was two rooms, one opening into the other, neither very large. The décor was subtly graded tones of gray and ivory. A panel of black marble, like a belt, swept around the rooms. A man appeared and shook hands with Ali, then led them through the first room, which had a bar and several tables occupied by men and women in beautiful evening clothes. Not one head turned to look at Nachman, despite his shameful attire. This crowd, Nachman thought, is as cool as the décor. In the other room, Nachman saw empty tables. All had cloths and plates and napkins, but only one was set with silverware and glasses. Ali had reserved the entire room.

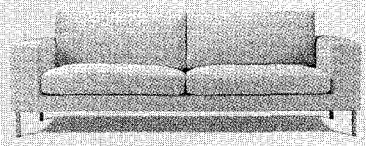
Waiters came and went. Dishes were placed before Nachman, wine was poured, dishes were removed. Everything was done with speed and grace, in silence. Ali chattered happily from one course to the next, describing the preparation of the soup and the fish. He was playing the gracious host. Nachman glanced up now and then and said, "Good."

"I'm so pleased you like it," Ali said.

Nachman was beginning to feel resentful again. He disliked the feeling. It had surprised him repeatedly in the past few days. That afternoon, before meeting Ali, he had prepared with excitement to talk about the paper. But Ali was absorbed by the idea of himself as a man who knew where and how to eat. Nachman thought the restaurant seemed too old for Ali, who was in the prime of life, the lover of the mythical Georgia Sweeny. Did he really care so much about food? Nachman remembered Norbert's comment about Sweeny. It had shocked him, but it now seemed less vulgar than healthy.

They finished a bottle of wine. Another bottle was set on the table. Ali had signalled for it with a nod or a glance. Nachman hadn't noticed. He'd already had a lot to drink. His attention was diffuse. He forgot about the paper. Ali now talked about Sweeny. He wanted to spend some years in Teheran, but Sweeny refused to live with restrictions on how she could dress. It was a perplexity. The chador was peasant attire, but even at the higher levels some women found it pleasing. Ali laughed at the idea of Sweeny in a chador. After all, she appeared nearly naked before a hundred thousand people on Saturday afternoons. Nachman laughed, too, though he wasn't sure why. Intermittently, he said things like "I see" and "Is that so?" He was hypnotized by pleasant boredom. It struck him that lots of people go through life without ever talking seriously about anything, let alone Bergson's metaphysics.

The table was cleared, the cloth swept clean and reset with fresh glasses and an ashtray. Ali ordered port. He settled back in his chair. A fine sheen of perspiration appeared below his dark eyes. The port



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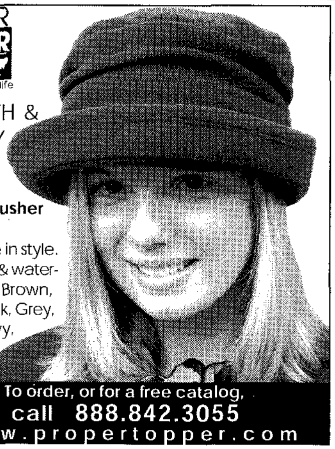

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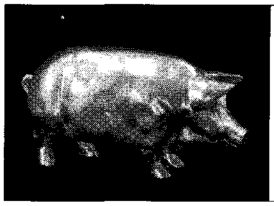

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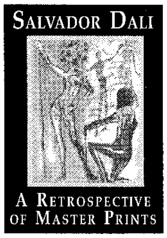

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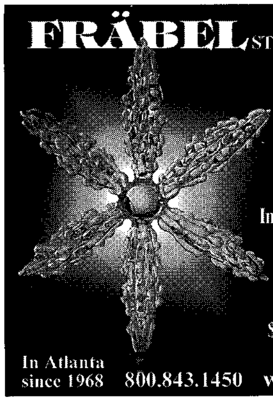

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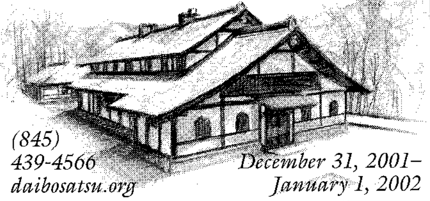

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arrived in a black bottle with a dull yellow label. It was held over a small flame and decanted. The taste was thick and sweet. Ali offered Nachman a cigar. Nachman didn’t smoke, but he accepted it anyway. They clipped the ends. Ali held a cigarette lighter to Nachman’s cigar and said, “Tell me, Nachman. It must be nearly finished, am I right?”

Nachman drew against the flame. He flourished the cigar and exhaled a stream of white smoke. “It’s finished,” he said, an air of superiority in his tone.

“Marvellous. I’ve been dying to hear about it.”

“Hear about what?”

“The paper.”

“Right. Well, it’s coming along.”

“You just said it was finished.”

“I mean in my head. Writing is a tedious chore. I’ll put it in the mail by Friday.”

Ali reached into the inside pocket of his jacket and withdrew a small card. He handed it to Nachman. Ali’s name, address, and telephone number were inscribed in brilliant black ink. He said, “Could you give me a sense of the paper?”

Nachman cleared his throat and brushed his napkin across his lips. Earlier, he’d been eager to talk about the paper. He had no heart for it now. Ali sensed Nachman’s reluctance. His dark eyes enlarged by a tiny degree and his mouth shaped itself with feeling. A subtle swelling, almost a pout, appeared in the lower lip. Nachman suddenly felt an intense desire to give Ali a pleasure that was worth ten thousand dinners, the undying pleasure of an idea. Nachman decided to say everything, to make it felt.

“I will begin the paper with a discussion of Zeno’s paradox, and then I will move swiftly to Leibniz’s invention of calculus. Then, then comes the metaphysics, but a good deal, Ali, depends on how I imitate Bergson’s musical style, particularly as I elucidate his idea of intuition. I could put it all in a simple logical progression, but the argument would be sterile, unnatural, and unconvincing. Don’t misunderstand me. Bergson is not some kind of rhetorician, but it is critical to understand what he means when he talks about intuition, and for this you must see why his style, his music, his way of advancing an argument by a sort of layering—”

Ali interrupted. He said, “I told Sweeny about your extraordinary grasp of metaphysics.”

Nachman hesitated. Ali raised an eyebrow and smiled. His expression intimated that, speaking man to man, Sweeny was relevant to metaphysics.

“She said that she would love to meet you.”

“Me?” Nachman flushed, his mind filling with a confusion of hurt and rage.

“It isn’t inconceivable that you would enjoy her company.”

The remark had a provocative thrust.

“I don’t object to meeting Sweeny.”

“You sound reluctant, Nachman.” Ali was teasingly ironic, with an edge of contempt.

“I wasn’t thinking about meeting anyone.”

“Sweeny would be the first to admit that she isn’t an intellectual. Don’t imagine otherwise. She has no pretensions of that sort. Perhaps you object to wasting time with people who aren’t intellectuals.”

“I know plenty of people who aren’t intellectuals.”

“Sweeny has other virtues. There is more to life than intellect.”

“I’m not crazy about intellectuals. Norbert is my best friend and he is an idiot. What are Sweeny’s other virtues?”

“She is a woman who exists for the eyes. Some things shouldn’t be described in words; among them are women like Sweeny. It cannot be done without desecration. That’s the reason for the chador. A man shouldn’t share his woman with other men, but I will make an exception for you. The three of us will go out some evening. Do you like to dance?”

“I can’t dance.”

“Perhaps it isn’t intellectual enough.”

“I also can’t swim. These things are related.”

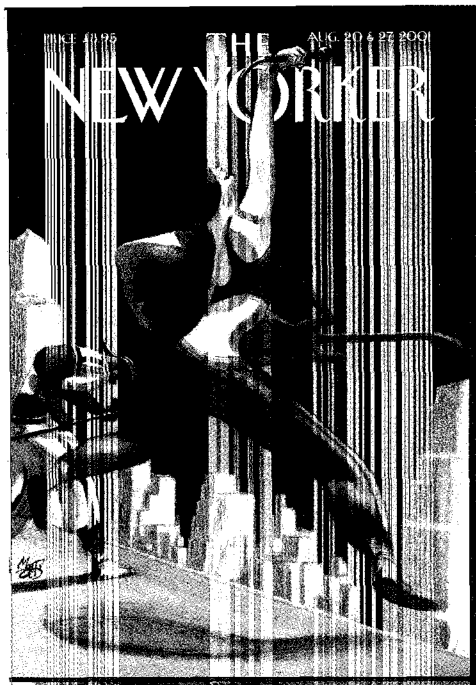
“How are they related?”

“I’m deficient in buoyancy, you know what I mean? To dance you must be light on your feet. Buoyant, as in water.”

“There is something heavy in your nature, Nachman.”

“I can’t even float, Ali. If I lie down in the water, I sink.”

“Well, you don’t have to dance. It would be enough to talk to Sweeny about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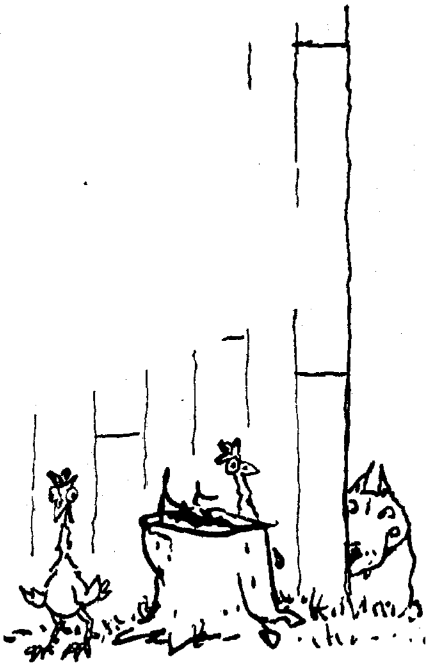
metaphysics. She will be delirious with excitement. She has never met a man who could tell her about metaphysics."

The conversation was more like a game of Ping-Pong than a fight with knives, and yet the hostility was obvious. Ali didn't want to hear about the paper. Ali didn't want to hear about Bergson or metaphysics. He was flaunting Sweeny, even giving her to Nachman, though not quite as he had given him the superb dinner. Ali's generosity had been reduced to an insulting message. Nachman could have wine and port and a Cuban cigar. Some night he could dance with Sweeny. But with all the metaphysics in the world he could never have a girlfriend like her.

There was no business with the check. There was no check. Ali simply stood and walked away from the table. Nachman followed him. The limousine was waiting. They climbed inside. It slipped away from the building and gained a dreamlike speed. Nachman felt an impulse to lean over the seat in front of him and look at the driver's face. But what if there was no face, only another back of a head?

He wondered how much Ali had paid for the dinner. The room at Chez Monsieur must have cost at least a few thousand dollars. And the dinner itself? Another two thousand? A bottle of wine could be five hundred. Nachman was guessing, but he couldn't be far off. Two bottles of wine, and then the port. There was also the tip.



"Ali, do you mind if I ask a question? How much did you tip the headwaiter and the others?"

"One doesn't tip servants."

Nachman should have known that waiters were servants. He was embarrassed, but he was also high, and he continued blithely thinking about the cost of dinner. Even if Ali didn't tip servants, he'd probably spent five thousand dollars, and not even the faintest shadow of a thought related to the cost of anything had appeared in his eyes. Nachman suddenly felt illuminated by a truth. Why not spend five thousand dollars on dinner? They had eaten well. The service had been magical. They had sipped port and puffed on their cigars, which must have cost a fortune, perhaps even the lives of the Cubans who smuggled them past the Coast Guard. Nachman felt that he was on the verge of grasping the complexities at the highest levels of the universe.

Ali looked splendid and triumphant. He had allowed Nachman to see him as a man who knows how to live and how to include a person like Nachman in the experience of living. He hadn't listened to anything about the paper. He'd made Nachman feel meaningless. The idea of himself as meaningless compared with Ali made Nachman chuckle.

Ali said, "What's funny?" He was smiling, ready to enjoy Nachman's funny thought.

"I've never had an evening like this. Thanks, Ali."

"We must do it again soon. With Sweeny."

Nachman was awakened the following day by the telephone. He slid out of bed and stood naked with the phone in his hand.

"I wish you'd been there, Norbert," he crowed. "You wouldn't believe how much Ali spent on dinner."

"How much?"

"Eleven, maybe twelve."

"Twelve hundred. Wow."

"Thousand."

There was silence.

Nachman continued, "As for the paper, by the end of the week it will be in the mail to Ali."

"That's fantastic, Nachman, but

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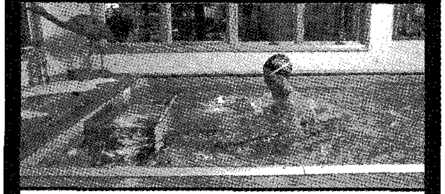
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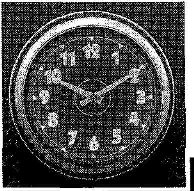
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don't bother mailing it. I'll come pick it up. You've done enough."

Nachman detected a strain of reservation in Norbert's voice. What a person says isn't always what a person means. If Norbert were to say what he was thinking, fully and precisely, he would have to talk for an hour. And yet Nachman heard everything in that tiny reservation. Norbert was jealous. Ali had spent thousands on a dinner for Nachman. Norbert wanted to be the one to give the paper to Ali. Personally.

"No trouble, Norbert. Besides, I'm going out of town on Friday. My mother moved to San Diego. I have to see her new house. I'll stick the paper in the mail. When I return late Monday, Ali will have read the paper, and you'll have a thousand bucks."

"A percentage."

"Fifty per cent."

"Too generous."

"I wouldn't have met Ali if not for you. What's money? It's soon spent. A friendship never. What a dinner."

"Nachman. I don't know what Ali spent, but it wasn't eleven thousand dollars, so don't jerk me off. I'm not stupid. I'll accept an agent's percentage. Say, twenty-five per cent."

"Are we in business, Norbert? If we're in business, we're partners."

Nachman enjoyed the heat of his feeling long after he said goodbye.

On Friday, he didn't leave town. He hadn't finished writing the paper, but that was only because he hadn't begun.

Ali phoned on Monday.

"It didn't arrive?" Nachman said. "I mailed it from my mother's house in San Diego. She had a nice house in Northridge, but decided to sell it, because real estate in her neighborhood went way up in value. She said to sleep in Northridge was like snoring money away. I used the address on your card. Is it correct?"

"Why would I put the wrong address on my card?"

"You sound angry."

"I am not a person who feels anger. Do you think the postal service is reliable?"

"We will go to the post office and initiate a search."

"The paper is lost?"

"Ali, if the paper doesn't arrive tomorrow, we will go to the post office and you will see a man who feels anger."

"O.K. I appreciate your sincerity."

Nachman stayed home the next day waiting for the phone to ring. The phone didn't ring. Nachman began to wonder why not. He was tempted to phone Ali and ask whether the paper had arrived. He glanced at the phone repeatedly but didn't touch it.

Late in the afternoon, there was a soft knock at the door. Nachman hurried to open it. It was a girl. She was average height, blond, very pretty. If Nachman had had to describe her to the police ten minutes from then, he could have said only that. Average height, blond, very pretty. She wore a blue cardigan the color of her eyes. She had left the cardigan open, revealing a skimpy bright-yellow cheerleader's outfit.

She said, "Hi."

"Hi."

"Are you Nachman?"

"Yes."

"Do you know who I am?"

"He sent you?"

"Can I come in?"

Nachman stepped back. She walked in, glanced around the apartment, and said, "This isn't bad. I mean, for a basement apartment. The light is nice. It could be real dark in here, but it isn't."

"Have a seat," Nachman said.

She sat on Nachman's sofa, her purse in her lap, her posture rather prim. She smiled pleasantly at Nachman and said, "Ali doesn't know what he did or said to offend you. But he is sorry. He hopes you'll forgive him."

"He is sorry?"

"Yes, he is sorry. He wants the paper."

"The paper didn't arrive?"

"Is this happening, Nachman?"

"What are you talking about?"

"What do you think? What am I doing in your apartment? Isn't this crazy?" She laughed. Her expression became at once pathetic and self-mocking. "Two men who, as far as I can tell, aren't brain-damaged can't talk to each other plainly. And I'm late for cheerleading practice."

"Go, then," Nachman said.

"Don't you think you owe Ali something? He took you to dinner. He intends to pay you a thousand bucks for the paper."

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"It's in the mail."

"Nachman, come on, be nice. Ali has an embassy job. He can't leave the country until he graduates. The paper is his passport. Won't you give it to me?"

"It's in the mail."

"Even a rough draft would do."

"Let's go to the post office."

"Oh, please, Ali went yesterday. I've been there twice today. Look, I brought a tape recorder." She took it out of her purse and held it up. "See this little machine? You talk to it. Tonight I'll type up what you've said."

Sweeny was clearly trying to seem amusing, but her voice was importunate and rather teary, and then she bent forward, her face in her hands. "I'm not good at this," she said. "It happens all the time. We go for a drive and Ali gets lost, so he pulls over at a street corner and tells me to ask some guys for directions. Man, we're in the barrio. I don't want to ask those guys anything. He says, 'You're a blond girl. They will tell you whatever you want to know.'"

Nachman wanted to embrace her and say "There, there," but worried that she would misinterpret the gesture.

She said, "I'm in the middle of this, Nachman. I don't even know what's going on. Ali is being mean to me. All I know is it's your fault. Do you hate Ali? He's suffered so much in his life."

"Suffered? Ali is a prince, isn't he?"

"Ali descends from the Qajar dynasty. It was deposed in 1921 by the Shah's father, Reza Shah. Ali's father owned villages, and beautiful gardens around Teheran. So much was taken away. They're still multimillionaires, but they have sad memories. Can you imagine how much they lost? It's really sad. Don't laugh. How can Ali think about schoolwork? You're laughing, Nachman. Please give me the paper. I'm really late for cheerleading practice."

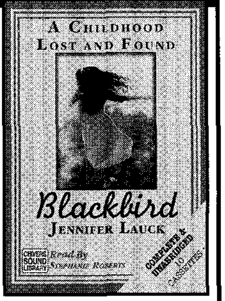
"I'm sorry."

Sweeny was on her feet. She said, "I guess I should go," and gave her head a small, defeated shake. "Ali tells me you're a smart guy, but I don't believe you understand the simplest thing."

Nachman said, "Practice can wait. I'll tell you about the paper."

Sweeny pursed her lips and frowned. "All right."

"Let's start with the idea of time. Tick tock, tick tock. That's how we



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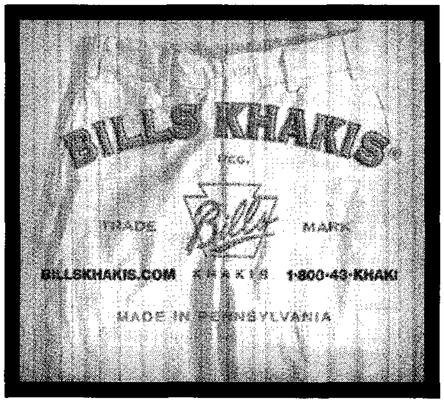

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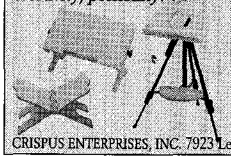

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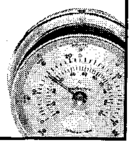

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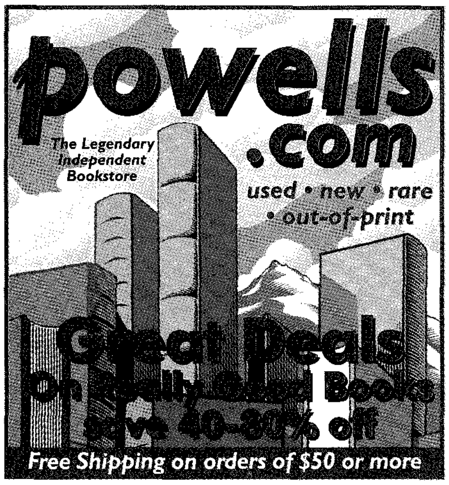
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measure time. With a clock. Do you follow me?"

"Yes."

"Each tick is separate from each tock. Each is a distinct and static unit. Each tock and tick is a particle that does not endure. It is replaced by another particle."

"Man, this is intense." She grinned. Her mood had changed radically. She was playing the moron for him. Nachman felt charmed. He began to adore her a little bit.

"Each particle occupies the space occupied by the previous particle, or tick or tock. Do you follow me?"

"Like 'hickory dickory dock.'"

"But the point is that 'tick tock' is an abstraction. A spatial idea about measuring time. It's nothing at all like the real experience of time. Real experience is fluid, as in a melody—la-la-la. Real human experience is different from the idea of experience. When you make love, time doesn't exist, isn't that true?"

"The paper is about sex?" Her mouth dropped open with mock amazement, and Nachman wondered about what could never happen between them.

"No. Making love is an example. I just thought of it. The nursery rhyme 'hickory dickory dock' is funny. It's mechanical. Love isn't funny. Love is an example of what's real."

"I'll just turn on the tape recorder."

"Sit down."

Sweeny sat.

Nachman was startled. He hadn't intended to order her to sit. But he had, and she had obeyed. There she was, a pretty blond Sweeny sitting on his sofa. Nachman felt a surge of gratification. Also power. He blushed and turned away so that she wouldn't witness her effect on him.

"As I was saying," he said, now addressing the ceiling. "We measure time by dividing it into tick tock, and this has nothing to do with . . . Look, if you can measure a thing, then you are talking about something that can change. Anything that can change is subject to death. The opposite of death is not life, it's love. How can I talk to you about Bergson? This won't do, Sweeny."

"Why can't you talk to me?"

"No damn tape recorder."

Nachman's voice had become hoarse. He felt a warmth in his chest and face, as if something had blossomed within because of this girl with her naked thighs and short yellow skirt. What he felt was the most common thing in the world, but Nachman didn't think it was uninteresting. He was inclined to do something. What? He could sit down beside her. The rest would take care of itself.

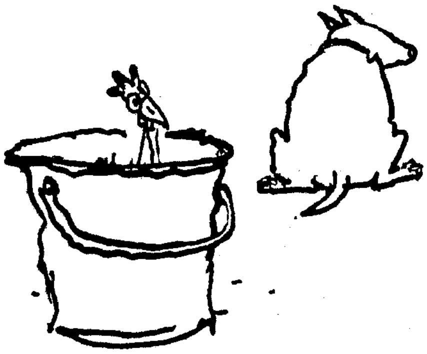
"Why not?"

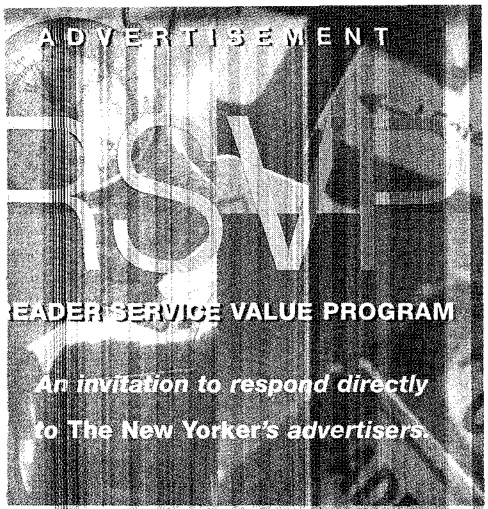
Nachman was jarred. The question returned him to himself. He didn't sit down beside her.

"Why not?" Nachman sighed. "I don't know why not. I suppose it's because I want you to understand me. I mean, I want you to get it. This is all about intuition, which is about real experience, where everything begins. You simply have to get it. I don't know what I mean. Maybe I don't mean anything." Raising his voice, Nachman said, "Please put the tape recorder away."

Sweeny stood up, aghast, the tape recorder in hand. She whispered, "Do you have something to say or not?"

Nachman shouldn't have said "please." He should have ordered Sweeny to put the tape recorder away. He'd been cowardly, unsure of his power. Now he had no power. He reached for the tape recorder and drew it slowly from her hand. She let it go. In the gesture of release, Nachman felt their connection falter. Sweeny's eyes enlarged as if to make a sky, a vastness wherein Nachman felt minuscule. Nachman was only a dot of being that subsisted within her blue light. A dot; no Nachman at all beyond what Sweeny perceived. He'd never been looked at that way by a woman. His knees trembled. He couldn't think. She said, "I don't believe you are interested

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in talking to me," and started toward the door.

Nachman called, "Hey!"

Sweeny stopped and looked back at him. He held the tape recorder toward her. She took it and said, "Ali ought to have his head examined." An instant later, she was gone.

Nachman sat at his small kitchen table and looked out the window. He rarely had visitors in his apartment, and yet he had never felt so alone. As the light failed, the trees became darker. Soon they were black shapes against the pink-green glow of sunset. Just before twilight became full night, a ghostly-looking dog appeared, sniffing about amid the ice plants. It sensed Nachman's eyes and lifted its head to face him. Nachman realized that it was a coyote, not a dog. He could see a glistening patina of moonlight on the coyote's nose. Nachman's heart beat with excitement, and his eyesight sharpened. His neck muscles stiffened as he met the coyote's stare.

The next morning, Nachman went to the post office. He asked about an envelope addressed to Prince Ali Massid. The clerk was unable to find it, and called for the supervisor. Nachman told the supervisor about the envelope. The supervisor said he would initiate a search. Nachman returned the next day. There was no envelope. There was nothing the next day, either. Nachman went regularly to the post office in the weeks that followed. He asked Norbert to go with him a few times. Norbert trudged along sullenly at Nachman's side. There was hardly any conversation. Once, Nachman asked in a soft voice, "Did you really need that tattoo?"

"Did Ali really need a paper?" Norbert said. He sounded unhappy.

Eventually, Norbert stopped going to the post office, and Nachman went less and less frequently. Then he, too, stopped. But over the years he continued to remember Ali's handsome face and Sweeny's beseeching expression, and he remembered the supervisor who had looked at him suspiciously and asked with a skeptical tone, "You're sure you mailed it?" Nachman wasn't sure, but then he hardly even remembered having written the paper, not one word. ♦

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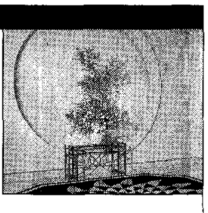

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GOD, INTERRUPTED

Revisiting the life of Jesus Christ.

BY JAMES WOOD

One of the many peculiarities of religion is that, like the Hoover-vacuum salesman and his celebrated packet of dirt, it offers to solve problems that it created in the first place. Take the "problem" of evil. In a world not created by God, the fact that people suffer must merely take its part in a team of other inexplicables. But in a world created by God evil must have been created, too—either by God or by a force opposed to God. Evil becomes a problem, an affront to God, which is "solved" only by our cleaving more strongly to God, who is goodness. In a sense, God is then what Cardinal Newman called the Catholic Church: "a great remedy for a great evil."

But is evil the problem, or God? This is the dark question that crouches blasphemously in the Bible—in the punishment of Adam and Eve for committing a sin that only God himself could have made possible, in the divine injunction that Abraham sacrifice his son Isaac, in the lamentations of the Psalmist and Job, and on into the New Testament, culminating in Jesus' cry of abandonment on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

The Bible is an anthology of human incomprehension. God made his covenant with Abraham, but then, over the next couple of thousand years, his chosen people found themselves slaves in Egypt, exiles in Babylon, and colonized subjects in their own lands under Roman occupation. The Messiah, the Jewish leader who prophets said would conquer all foreign nations and subject them to Israel's sovereignty, had conspicuously failed to appear.

The most inventive "solution" to the failure of the old covenant is Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the son of God who comes from God and who is God, who takes upon himself the sins of the world, and who allows himself to be sacrificed, thereby cleansing the world of its sin. Christ is the great cure for a great sickness. In Christian doctrine, particularly in the visions of Paul and John, Jesus is God made briefly human (this is called the Incarnation), and he is the announcement of a new covenant, not with Israel alone but with the whole earth. For Paul, Jesus was the second Adam, the corrector of Adam's original sin: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

So Jack Miles is quite right, in his new book, "Christ: A Crisis in the Life of God" (Knopf; $26.95), to suggest, a little blasphemously, that the story of the New Testament is the story of a self-rescue—a rescue by God from a calamity that God had created. God had cursed his own creation in Eden, after Adam's sin, and was now lifting that curse, or, at least, allowing for the possibility of remission. "The world is a great crime, and someone must be made to pay for it," Miles writes. "Mythologically read, the New Testament is the story of how someone, the right someone, does pay for it. . . . In its broadest outlines, the story of the Bible is the story of how God first turned his blessings of fertility and dominion into curses and then turned his curses back into blessings."

And, as Miles argues, this new covenant represented a shocking rupture. Jesus was not the kind of Messiah that most Jews expected. He was not a military leader. He claimed to be not merely an agent of God but the son of God, and even God made flesh (a ferociously un-Jewish idea). He spoke not of an imminent victory and a realizable kingdom but, riddlingly, of a vague immaterial salvation, of the need to be born again "of water and of the spirit." In place of Israel's victory over its enemies, he spoke of loving one's neighbor as oneself. Deuteronomy had promised that "the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail," but Jesus promised that the first shall be last and the last first. And, most scandalously, this Messiah went willingly to be killed by the Roman authorities, speaking of himself as the sacrifice, the world's sacrificial lamb.

All this, though familiar to Christians, is given lucid force in Miles's careful retrieval, in which he combingly takes us through the chief astonishments of Jesus' life, largely as they are recounted in the Gospel of John. Some commentators are so singly fixated on the New Testament that they make the Bible seem like a double bed that has been slept in on only one side. Miles, a former Jesuit with considerable expertise in the Biblical languages, lies on both sides, constantly reverting to the Old Testament, rightly noting the many ways in which the New Testament alludes to, builds on, and—the Christian claim—supersedes its Scriptures.

But Miles reads the Gospels in a peculiar manner. His previous book, "God: A Biography," dealt with God, in Miles's words, "as—and only as—the protagonist of a classic of world literature." His new book continues that literary biography into the New Testament. Miles is not interested in Jesus as the object of religious belief or as the quarry of historical research. For him, Jesus is a "literary character" who

KOREN, 7/25/83

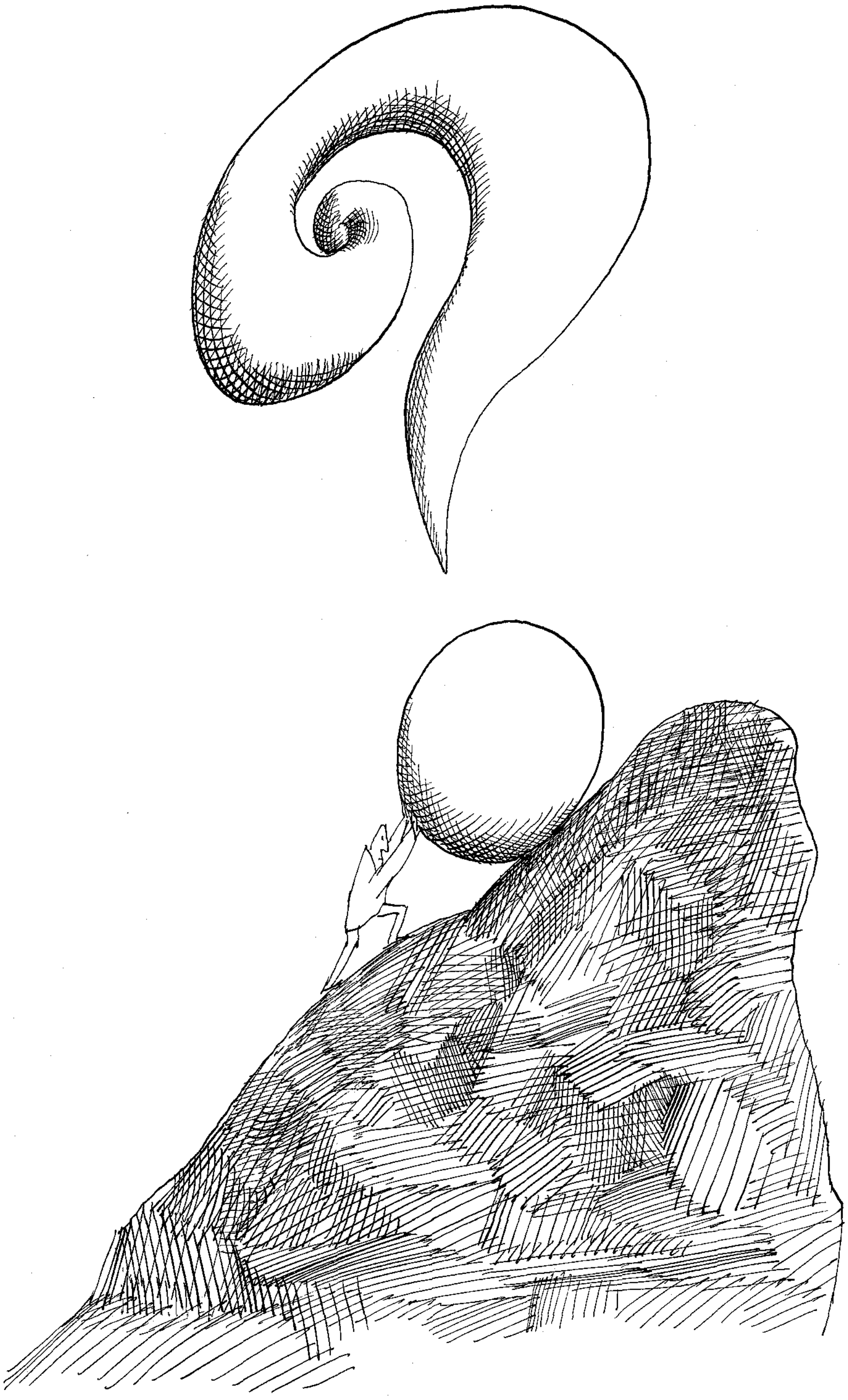
also happens to be God incarnate. He wants to read Jesus as God, Part II.

Literary critique of the Bible has been one of the most fruitful developments in criticism over the past twenty years. The work of writers like David Damrosch, Robert Alter, Frank Kermode, and Gabriel Josipovici has expanded our sense of the Scriptures as pieces of literature, as narratives embossed with pattern, allusion, and symbol. A literary analysis of Genesis has no interest in deciding either the religious or the historical authority of the text. It wants to see how it works as a piece of writing, on the proper assumption that in literature all effects are literary ones (that is, they are created by writers), and that even religious texts create religious effects through literary means.

This kind of criticism has sometimes set itself against historical Bible scholarship, though it has often been deeply indebted to it. Historical criticism is interested in the historical actualities of the Biblical world, and is keen to discover what we can know about who wrote what, and when. Such scholars do not deny the existence of literary artifice, but they want to explain its origins rather than explore its means. Contradictions in the character of God, say, might be explained by reference to the different human authors of the Bible, as far as scholarship has been able to ascertain the facts. But literary analysis is interested in how those contradictions are made by writers to work in the text.

Jack Miles's criticism, though literary, differs from the familiar literary methods. Miles has little interest in how a literary character is constructed; he is merely grateful that it exists. Surveying the Bible's contradictory representations of God, Miles sees not a variety of contradictory authors but the single biography of a God who is himself contradictory. He is fond of what used to be called "character criticism"; he reads God and Jesus as if they were fictional creations with real lives off the page. He is like the critic who discusses Dickens's characters as if they were real human beings. (Does Pip live happily ever after?) Such a way of reading does not, despite its avowed ambitions, really attend to a literary character as a literary character but converts him out of literature and makes him a real human being, since it tends to supply motive where the text fails to. Years ago, the Shakespeare scholar L. C. Knights mocked the character criticism of A. C. Bradley and others, in an essay entitled "How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?" Miles, in his previous book, announced that he was on Bradley's side against Knights, and that it was time for Biblical-character criticism: "Unless the viewer of 'Hamlet' can believe that Hamlet was born and will die, unless the viewer's imagination is carried offstage into the life for which there is no direct evidence onstage, the play dies with its protagonist. A character understood to have no life offstage can have no life onstage. And so it is also with God as the protagonist of the Bible."

The immediate effect of Miles's decision to read Jesus "biographically" as God incarnate is that Jesus is furnished



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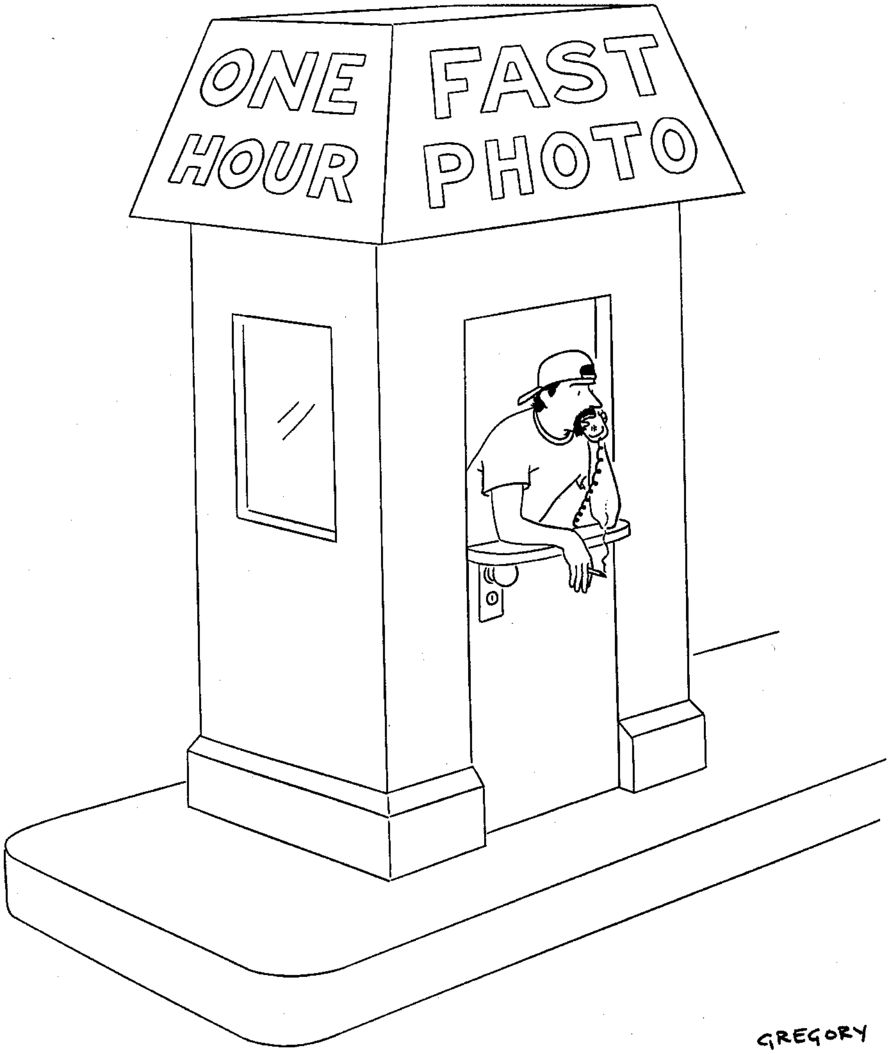

"You have no idea how political this place is."

• •

with a two-thousand-year past, an elephantine memory, and a lot of explaining to do. As Miles comments, if Jesus is God, then "God's earlier words were Jesus's words as well." Suddenly, in Miles's hands, the novelty of Jesus' covenant becomes even greater. If Jesus was really God, then God died on the cross (or, indeed, committed suicide). If Jesus was really God, then God did not suffer merely as a father when his son hung on the cross but suffered himself. It also means that, after two thousand years, God changed his mind, fiddled with his essence, and abandoned his old vengeful and jealous habits in place of a new gentleness, pacifism, and universalism. "If we grant that Jesus is God Incarnate, then we must grant as well that he has the right to announce a deep change in God—which is to say, in himself—without quite calling the change by that name and without otherwise troubling to explain it," Miles writes.

Why would God have changed his mind? According to Miles, because he had failed: his covenant lapsed because he had been unable to defeat his enemies. God "knew he should have stopped Rome," Miles says. "He knew he had not done so." Within the terms by which, starting at his victory over Pharaoh, God himself has defined his divinity, "he has failed. Unless some adjustment of those terms can be made, then he cannot continue to be God. The adjustment he makes, his own disarmament, entails an expansion of membership in his covenant. But he brings about this expansion not, first, out of love for Gentiles, much less out of ha-

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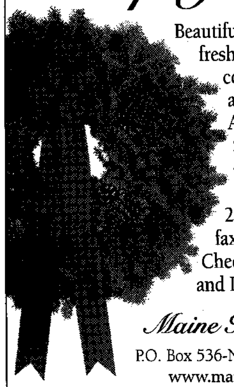

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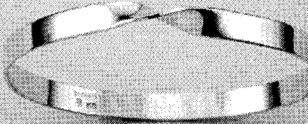

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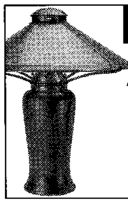

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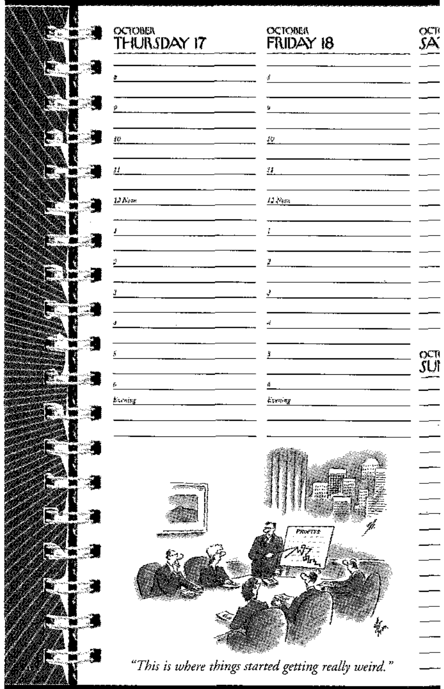

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tred for the Jews, but, rather, to reconstitute his own identity." It is a technique of diplomatic jujitsu: "Instead of baldly declaring that he is unable to defeat his enemies, God may declare that *he has no enemies*." Hence God's emphasis on loving one's neighbor as one's self, and his decision to become the God of all, not the jealous potentate of Israel alone.

There is real interest in Miles's story, in which God essentially apologizes for making a hash of things and promises to do better next time. And yet Miles's habit of writing about God as if he were a human being—who not only failed but "must" admit this failure, who has to reconstitute his "identity," who is in danger of ending his "storied career," and so on—subverts his book's own argument. Miles says that he wants to take Jesus "seriously as God Incarnate," but how serious can Jesus' divinity be if God is only human? At that point, why bother to go along with the notion of the Incarnation in the first place?

To be sure, both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament often describe God in human terms, as jealous, vengeful, irrational, lonely, and so on—at one point, Miles calls God "strangely and painfully friendless." But it is one thing to acknowledge the Bible's helpless anthropomorphism—whereby any human being who tells stories about God will inevitably make God patchily in man's image—and another to volunteer one's own extra anthropomorphism, whereby God is thoroughly humanized; one thing, in other words, to see God in human terms and another to make him human. Miles's inventively psychological language, as it wends its way through his book, imagines a God who shares the attributes of his people, is limited in power, is ultimately knowable, and has an admirable tendency to apologize. In short, he is the opposite of the God worshipped and feared by Israel in the Hebrew Bible—a work that, Robert Alter rightly warns, bristles with "forces that can be neither grasped nor controlled by humankind." Miles's God is too graspable and too controllable.

More to the point, although Jesus is a "literary character" in the sense that the Gospel writers represented and shaped his life on the page, he was not conceived by those writers as a literary

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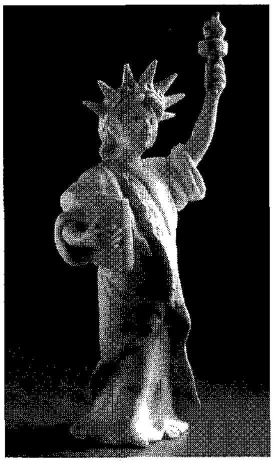

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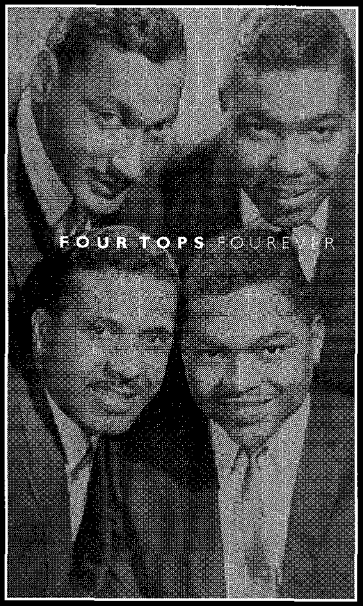

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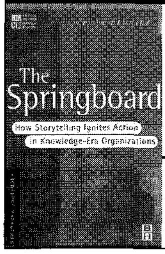

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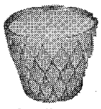

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character. The same goes for God. He may well be a human construction, but he was not constructed by the writers of the Scriptures as a human construction. He was constructed as the opposite of a human construction. The danger of Miles's approach is obvious enough: too often in his book, the reader has the sense that Jesus is being treated as a fictional creation whom no human being actually created. When describing Jesus' nativity, Miles has many shrewd things to say about the symbolism of our encountering the Messiah as a baby in a manger. The story of how Mary and Joseph, returning to their home town in obedience to Caesar Augustus' census, spent the night in a stable, where the baby Jesus was born, while clearly a literary invention, enhances the pathos and appeal of the Messiah. Miles notes a pattern: "Jesus's involuntary defenselessness at the beginning of his life mirrors and anticipates his voluntary defenselessness at its end." This is excellent, and it is therefore a pity that Miles also writes, "When God makes Mary and Joseph ciphers in the census of Caesar Augustus, he emphasizes their helplessness—and the helplessness of his own infant self." Suddenly, God has become the Gospel writer, which is, to say the least, an oddly unliterary way to discuss a narrative created by people.

Miles's lack of interest in the actual Gospel writers matters, because it is not always clear that the Gospel writers believed what Miles takes as the founding premise of his book—that Jesus was God incarnate. Miles gets around this problem by relying predominantly on the Gospel of John, which is the Gospel most intoxicated by the idea of incarnation. Whereas in Matthew and Mark Jesus sometimes suggests that he is subordinate to God, and may not always know God's mind, in John Jesus astoundingly claims oneness with God—"I and my Father are one." But, if Miles relies largely on only one Gospel, how can he claim that he is treating the New Testament as a unified literary text?

Miles's book is perhaps less a literary critique than a theologico-literary retelling, even a meditation on the problem of evil. The philosopher Josiah Royce, whom Miles does not mention, labored at a theodicy—the formal term for the justification of God's tolerance of evil—holding that when we suffer God suffers, too. Why would God suffer? Because, Royce replied, suffering completes a soul, and without suffering God's life could not be perfected: "It is logically necessary that the Captain of your salvation should be perfect through suffering." Royce, cheerfully treating God as if he were human, sounds somewhat like Miles. Minus Royce's anthropomorphism, this notion—that God suffered on the cross and thus suffers with us now when we suffer—has become commonplace in contemporary theodicy. Such a notion does not solve the problem of evil, because it does not absolve God of cruelty (after all, just because God suffers with us is no reason that we should also suffer); and because it seems to limit God's power (God, in this scheme, seems incapable of not suffering). It is only a figure, a picture, a way of seeing. And, as a way of seeing, Miles's book has great power and depth.

Though he does not try to solve the problem of evil, his book gives us, with horrid clarity, the vision of a culpable, guilty, and finally atoning God, who kills himself on the cross as Jesus Christ, in a botched attempt to cleanse the world of its sins. That the evil world we live in has clearly not been so cleansed may be evidence not that Jesus was not the Messiah but that there can be no Messiah, for the world cannot be cleansed. Pressing to its logical end the offense of Jesus' great rupture, Miles conveys the paradox inherent in the idea of Messianism itself. On the one hand, the rupture that Jesus enacted threatens the continuity whereby he could be what he claimed to be, the Son of God—God Extended. But without some kind of rupture there can be no Messiah, for a God who simply continues to be himself has no need of Messianic intervention. Messianism is the idea of God Interrupted; and so Messianism is necessarily a kind of blasphemy. Jesus was that blasphemy—a blasphemy created, of course, by God himself. ♦

LIFE IN CALIFORNIA

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From the San Francisco Chronicle.

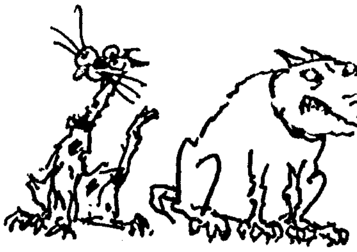
BRIEFLY NOTED

Why Did I Ever, *by Mary Robison (Counterpoint; $23).* Money Breton is struggling to keep it together: she detests her job (which she is in danger of losing) as a Hollywood script doctor; her daughter is a recovering heroin addict; her son was the victim of a violent crime; her boyfriend isn't so sharp; and she watches a great deal of TV with a man who's almost—but not quite—a perfect companion. If all this sounds grim, it is, and yet there's grace and humor in the slippage between the ideal and the real: sure, we fall short, Robison seems to say, but more often than not a shrug and a quip save us from desperation. The author, who is known as a minimalist, here creates a narrative out of fragmented paragraphs, and the book works best when she strips Money's most explicit fears away. At these moments, a simple sentence fragment—"Canoe, moon, ukelele"—seems a close to perfect expression of lost beauty.

The Subject Steve, *by Sam Lipsyte (Broadway; $23.95).* Steve is the subject of a medical study: he is dying of a disease that no one has ever seen before. His doctors, "freakshow impresarios" who could pass for deeply psychotic nephews of the Marx Brothers, dub it PREXIS: Preparatory Extinction Syndrome. But Steve is not ready to become extinct, and his adventures in resisting the inevitable make up the bulk of the book, as he looks for help from a generally unsympathetic cast, ranging from the sadistic, parable-obsessed cult leader Heinrich to Steve's near-genius daughter Fiona. A book about mortality is a risky prospect, but Lipsyte is very funny, and his stylistic high-wire act—a rowdy prose that is by turns shocking and lyrical—is equal to his daring premise.

Pox Americana: The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775-82, *by Elizabeth A. Fenn (Hill & Wang; $25).* When smallpox broke out during the American Revolution, conditions for contagion were ideal. People who were crowded in besieged cities, military encampments, or on ships infected one another, while travelling soldiers and sailors and fleeing civilians often unwittingly spread the disease. (Smallpox shows no symptoms during its two-week incubation period.) North America's peoples (black, red, and white) were far more vulnerable to the disease than the British, because they had been exposed to it far less, and many Americans suspected their enemies of waging germ warfare by deliberately infecting the civilian population. Fenn's use of contemporary sources, including Lakota pictographs, conveys the frightfulness of the disease and human helplessness when it struck. In an epilogue, the author points out that the epidemic took five times as many lives as the war did, hitting Native American populations especially hard: "While the American Revolution may have defined the era for history, epidemic smallpox nevertheless defined it for many of the Americans who lived and died in that time."

FM, *by Richard Neer (Villard; $24.95).* In this hybrid of history and memoir, Neer, a veteran of New York City's WNEW, recalls the brief moment when FM radio, in its infancy, coincided with the extraordinary vitality of sixties rock, and FM stations became important countercultural institutions. Free to play (and say) what they wanted, disk jockeys concocted a heady, often unpredictable brew of extended album tracks, shaggy-dog stories, and political commentary. This mythic period ended in the early seventies, when station owners began instituting controls designed to maximize revenue, including more stringent musical formatting and predetermined "playlists." The best parts of this bittersweet account provide off-microphone glimpses of FM pioneers like Boston's manic and sarcastic Charles Laquidara, and New York's sultry Nightbird, Alison Steele.



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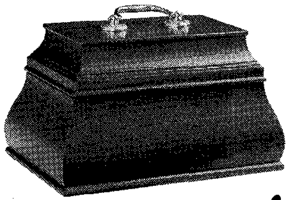

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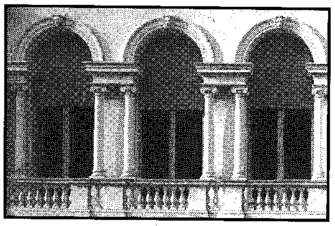

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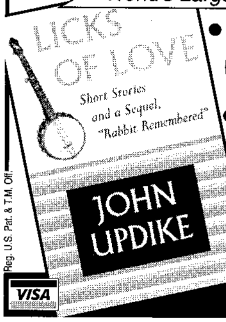

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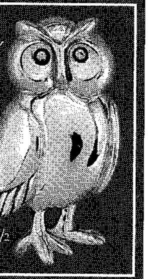

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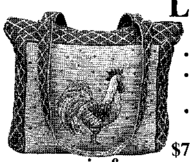

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MANY MANSIONS

On the centenary of Louis Kahn's birth, a look at his legacy. And his secret life.

BY PAUL GOLDBERGER

When Louis Kahn collapsed and died of a heart attack in a men's room in Penn Station on a Sunday evening in March, 1974, he was the most celebrated architect in the United States. He had recently finished the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth. The Yale Center for British Art was under construction in New Haven. A business school he had designed in Ahmedabad, India, was nearly complete, and in Dacca, Bangladesh, he was overseeing the largest project of his life, a series of government buildings that would eventually become the national capital.

Kahn was a seventy-three-year-old man with messy white hair and a badly scarred face. He wore rumpled suits, and on the day he died he had spent nearly twenty-four hours travelling from India to New York. He looked exhausted and unkempt, and the authorities who dealt with his body didn't recognize his name. He was sent to the city morgue. His passport said that he lived at 1501 Walnut Street in Philadelphia, but the police who went to that address found that it was an office building. Since it was Sunday and nobody was there, they let the matter drop for the time being.

It wasn't until late on Tuesday that word got out that Kahn had died two days earlier. I was then a young architecture critic at the New York *Times*, and I wrote an obituary that said that Kahn was considered by most scholars to have been the nation's foremost living architect, that his sombre, poetic buildings of stone and concrete led a generation of younger architects away from glass boxes, and that he was survived by his wife, Esther, and a daughter, Sue Ann.

Several years later, I learned that there was more to Kahn's personal story. He had another daughter, Alexandra Tyng, who was twenty when her father died, and a son, Nathaniel, who was eleven. Kahn, it turned out, had three families. Alexandra was the daughter of Kahn and Anne Tyng, an architect who had worked closely with him. Nathaniel's mother was Harriet Pattison, a landscape architect who followed Tyng in Kahn's extramarital affections. Kahn did not flaunt his habit of forming liaisons with colleagues and keeping the relationships going on parallel tracks with his marriage. In fact, he said so little about his private life that Vincent Scully, the architectural historian who wrote the first book on Kahn's work, in 1962, hadn't known that Kahn was married. "For a while, I didn't know he had even one family—that was part of his mystery," Scully said.

Nathaniel Kahn, who is now thirty-eight, told me recently that once a week for several years his father would take the train to Chestnut Hill, a suburban part of Philadelphia, have dinner with Nathaniel and his mother at their house, and put the boy to bed. Nathaniel would be awakened at one or two o'clock in the morning and bundled into the back seat of his mother's car, in his pajamas. Then they would all drive downtown, stopping half a block short of Kahn's house on Clinton Street, where he lived with his wife. Nathaniel remembers his father waking him up, kissing him, and walking down the street in the darkness.

Kahn's professional life seemed to be in a kind of vague disarray that paralleled his personal situation. His office was above a cigar store in downtown Philadelphia. Old coffee cans were plunked on top of drafting tables and used as ashtrays. Just before Jacqueline Onassis came by to talk to him about designing the Kennedy Library, Kahn ran out to buy real ashtrays, but they didn't do much to offset his shabby surroundings. Not necessarily because she cared about this sort of thing, Onassis hired the more corporate I. M. Pei instead. Kahn attracted clients whose high ambitions were matched by their patience and their disdain for conventional symbols of ar-

Louis Kahn's children—Sue Ann Kahn, Alexandra Tyng, and Nathaniel Kahn—in the neighborhood their father grew up in.

NEIL SELKIRK

chitectural fashion. His work is brooding and deep, like a Rothko painting. He combined materials in an unusual manner—for instance, wood panels are set into concrete frames in the symmetrical laboratory wings of the Salk Institute overlooking the Pacific in La Jolla—and he could use natural light to profoundly moving effect, as with the lightwells that bring indirect natural light into the sanctuary of the Unitarian Church in Rochester, which is made of concrete block.

Kahn used the basic tools of architecture—space, proportion, light, texture—sparely and with an almost religious reverence. He didn't want his buildings to appear to be so light that they could float off the earth, like Mies van der Rohe's, and he didn't want them to have swooping, eye-catching shapes, like Eero Saarinen's, or to be full of decoration, like the work Philip Johnson and Edward Durell Stone were doing in the nineteen-sixties. Kahn's buildings are tough.

Kahn had the manner of a slightly distracted academic. He tended to ramble on in a poetic, quasi-mystical way about light and space and stone, but this could be something of an act. He would say, "I asked the brick what it wanted to be, and it said, 'I want to make an arch.' " Or, "The sun never knew how great it was until it hit the side of a building." If you were his kind of client, you ate this up. Jonas Salk told Kahn that he wanted to build the sort of building he might bring Picasso to. He didn't talk to Kahn about how many square feet his scientists needed. It was pretty clear from the beginning that Kahn and Salk would get along.

Esther Kahn was a medical researcher. Her daughter, Sue Ann, remembers her mother listening to one of Kahn's discourses on architecture and observing that she understood barely a word. But Esther was protective of Kahn, and loyal. "She told me my father was an artist, that he wasn't like the other fathers," Sue Ann says. From time to time, Esther used her earnings to keep Kahn's office afloat financially, and when Sue Ann was growing up the family lived with Esther's mother to save money.

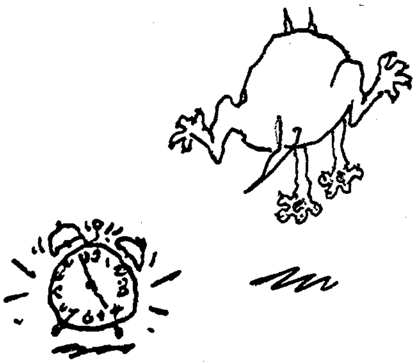
Esther sent word through friends that neither her husband's other children nor their mothers were welcome at Kahn's funeral. They showed up anyway, and were given seats at the rear of the funeral parlor. Four years ago, Nathaniel, who is a filmmaker, began work on a documentary about his father and his unusual family. He interviewed me about the night I wrote Kahn's obituary, and last spring he called to say that he had just been filming his father's work in Bangladesh and wanted to show me what he had come up with. There are interviews in the film with people who were close to Kahn, encomiums from Frank Gehry and Philip Johnson, a conversation with the owner of a music barge Kahn designed in the early nineteen-sixties who remembered Nathaniel as a child. The material is only partly edited, and I sensed that Nathaniel still hasn't quite figured out what he thinks of his father, whom he views with a mix of anger, exasperation, and awe.

The Bangladesh segment of the film is remarkable. It is the story of a Jewish architect who is hired to design the capital of a Muslim country, nearly goes broke while doing so, and is posthumously revered by the people he worked for. "He was no ordinary person," Shamsul Wares, a professor of architecture in Dacca, says in an interview. "He wanted to be Moses here. It was nothing, only paddy fields, and you are going to build something that is going to be the best building in the world?" Kahn spent the last twelve years of his life on the Bangladesh project, which was started when the country was still part of Pakistan. When Bangladesh declared independence, in 1971, Kahn's contract was terminated and construction halted, but he kept working away on his designs. The government of Bangladesh hired Kahn back the next year to start the project up again, but it was not finished until 1983, nine years after he died.

At Dacca, Kahn achieved a commission adequate to his yearnings for monumentality. The heart of the complex is a sprawling set of geometric forms in concrete, framed by strips of marble that make the concrete sections look like enormous blocks. The central building is a composition of boxes and cylinders arranged around an assembly hall. Huge triangular, square, and circular openings are cut into the façade. The buildings in the complex are harsh, like so much of Kahn's work, but they have a primal quality, and are serene rather than cold.

Curiously, there are no biographies of Louis Kahn, although there have been many books about his work. He would have been a hundred this year. He was born in Estonia in 1901 and came to Philadelphia when he was five. The biographical section of the books about him usually mention that his face was burned by coals when he was a small boy, and that he grew up in poverty and walked across Philadelphia every day to attend first art school and then the University of Pennsylvania on a scholarship. He started his career as a fairly conventional modern architect, designing public housing in Philadelphia, much of it in partnership with the architect Oscar Stonorov. Most architectural historians accept the premise, put forth by Scully, that he didn't really find his way until he went to the American Academy in Rome in the early nineteen-fifties. He discovered the power and beauty of Roman ruins, and when he came back to the United States his architecture had less glass and more masonry, and instead of being light and airy it was solid and heavy and full of simple geometric shapes not unlike ruins.

Kahn's first important commission was for an addition to the Yale Art Gallery, which was finished in 1953, when he was fifty-two years old. He had been teaching part time at Yale, and the president of the university, A. Whitney Griswold, asked him to design the first of a series of modern buildings for Yale's largely neo-Gothic campus. Kahn was followed by Eero Saarinen, Paul Rudolph, Philip Johnson, and Gordon Bunshaft, but his art gallery was more influential than anything the others designed. From the street, the building looks nearly blank, with a brick façade decorated with thin lines of limestone. But inside there is an innovative concrete ceiling of tetrahedrons for the galleries and a remarkable triangular stairway set inside a cylinder of concrete.



As part of his film project, Nathaniel, along with his producer, Susan Behr, visited the neighborhood Kahn grew up in, an area just north of downtown Philadelphia called Northern Liberties, which has diagonal streets, narrow alleys, freestanding houses, and, most striking of all, a number of red brick factory buildings. When Nathaniel and Susan walked through the streets of Northern Liberties, it became clear that the roots of Kahn's style are not in Rome but much closer to home. The big factories are remarkably like many of Kahn's buildings. One of them has large square windows and a sliced-off corner, and it looks for all the world like the exterior of the library Kahn designed for Phillips Exeter Academy. The most unusual industrial structure in Northern Liberties has a kind of zigzagging façade of brick and a series of open loggias, like brick-enclosed balconies, set into the façade, with solid brick walls behind them. The brick window openings are topped by concrete lintels. It is a composition of light and shadow, solid and void, with a solemn grace.

The similarities between the factory buildings in Northern Liberties and the architecture Kahn designed, not only at Exeter but also in India and Bangladesh and elsewhere, are too great to be accidental. The impression the old buildings made on Kahn could have been unconscious, or perhaps he carried it around with him knowingly, afraid for years to make much of it. Nathaniel, who went to Northern Liberties in search of a personal connection to his father, seems to have come back with a scholarly insight.

Louis Kahn designed with more self-assurance than almost any other architect of his time, but he had great difficulty making up his mind. He was excruciatingly slow. Architects like Frank Gehry look to him as the model of what it means to pursue an artistic vision with little compromise. Kahn was not practical; he was passionate. He ran his office so casually that he died hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt, and, while some of his financial problems surely came from his unusual domestic arrangements, he also tended to agonize over his work, designing and redesigning. A Kahn building was a work of art, and if the first version of the design turned out to cost two or three times as much as the budget, which often happened, Kahn would cut it back. He seemed to see the need to edit not as an affront but as a chance to keep on designing. He liked to talk about permanence and to place his buildings in the continuum of architectural history, but when a building was done it meant that all the alternative ways he could think of to make it were no longer possible.

In the late nineteen-sixties, Kahn designed a house for Norman and Doris Fisher in Hatboro, a suburb of Philadelphia. It cost forty-five thousand dollars. Kahn charged them a five-thousand-dollar fee, and Norman Fisher told me that he is sure the architect lost money on it, because he redesigned the house nine times. Kahn was not a great architect of houses, but the Fisher house, a set of tall boxes of cypress, stone, and glass built at angles to one another, is warm and modest. While there are details, like the built-in wooden bench and the fireplace set within a stone half cylinder, that hint at aspects of Kahn's public architecture to come, the place doesn't seem like a public building in miniature, the way some of Kahn's houses do.

One day a few months ago, Nathaniel Kahn filmed a meeting with his two half sisters at the Fisher house. Sue Ann Kahn is a flutist and an administrator at Mannes College of Music. Alexandra Tyng is a painter. Sue Ann, through her mother, was Kahn's primary heir. He did not include his younger children or their

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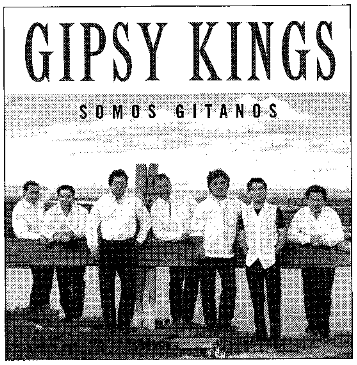

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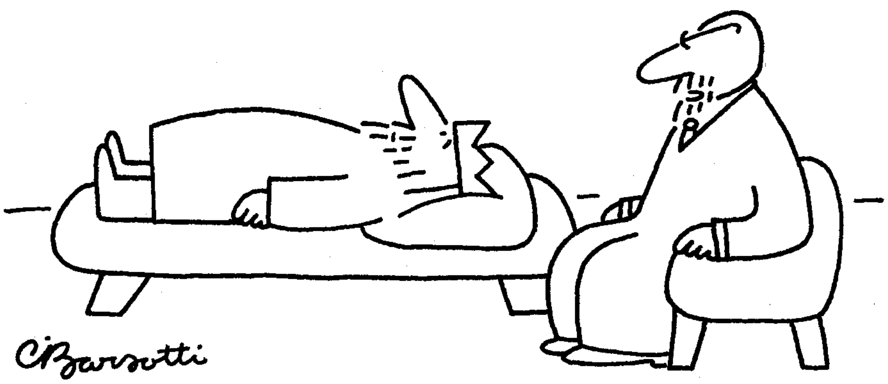

"And do you feel that you are a pretender?"

mothers in his will, which may have been just as well for them, given that his office was so deeply in debt when he died. Kahn was an unusually gifted draftsman, and his most valuable assets were his exquisite pen-and-ink drawings, pastel sketches, and pencil renderings on tracing paper. Two years after Kahn died, the State of Pennsylvania appropriated four hundred and fifty thousand dollars to purchase the drawings in his office, and they were deposited in a Kahn archive. Sue Ann ended up with the drawings that had been Esther's, along with most of her father's personal property. In the early nineteen-nineties, Sue Ann led a successful campaign to stop renovations on the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, one of Kahn's greatest buildings. The director of the Kimbell wanted to expand it by lengthening the travertine-and-concrete vaults, which would have made the building the architectural equivalent of a stretch limousine. Alexandra and Esther joined in the protest, and also in an unsuccessful effort to dissuade Jonas Salk from putting a new building awkwardly close to the one Kahn had designed for the Salk Institute.

On the day of the filming, the Kahn children walked through the Fisher house, making genteel comments. Then they sat down before a huge stone fireplace in the living room and talked about their father. Sue Ann said that when she was growing up she asked him many times why he didn't build a house for her and her mother. "He told me about this vision he had of a window with many mullions," she said. "Like an old house at dusk, with a light on inside, where a woman is preparing a meal." But Kahn couldn't afford to build a house for himself, and if he had been able to he wouldn't have designed one with an old-fashioned window and mullions. When an architect designs his own house, he presents his aesthetic aspirations as they conform to his private life. The private realm becomes a public statement. It can be no accident that Kahn's least successful buildings were his houses. He liked orchestrating public life in grand buildings.

At the end of his life, Kahn was almost willfully eccentric. His words were self-conscious in a way that his buildings never were, and he seemed to like being seen as a guru. It makes sense that he enjoyed going to India and Bangladesh. In Philadelphia, he had to cope with debts and three families clamoring for his attention, but on the subcontinent he was a prophet. He was a difficult, self-absorbed artist devoted to his work. He would go to his office at night and on holidays, perhaps not so much to escape domesticity but simply because his greatest passion was drawing buildings and thinking about what architecture means. His earnestness put him somewhat out of fashion for a while after his death, and even now it dates him more than anything else. "Did the world need the Fifth Symphony before it was written? Did Beethoven need it?" he asked. "He designed it, he wrote it, and the world needed it. Desire is the creation of a new need." Kahn believed in designing for the ages, and he pretty much did. Only a few buildings in our time can be called sublime. Many of them—the Salk Institute, the Kimbell, Dacca—are Kahn's. ♦

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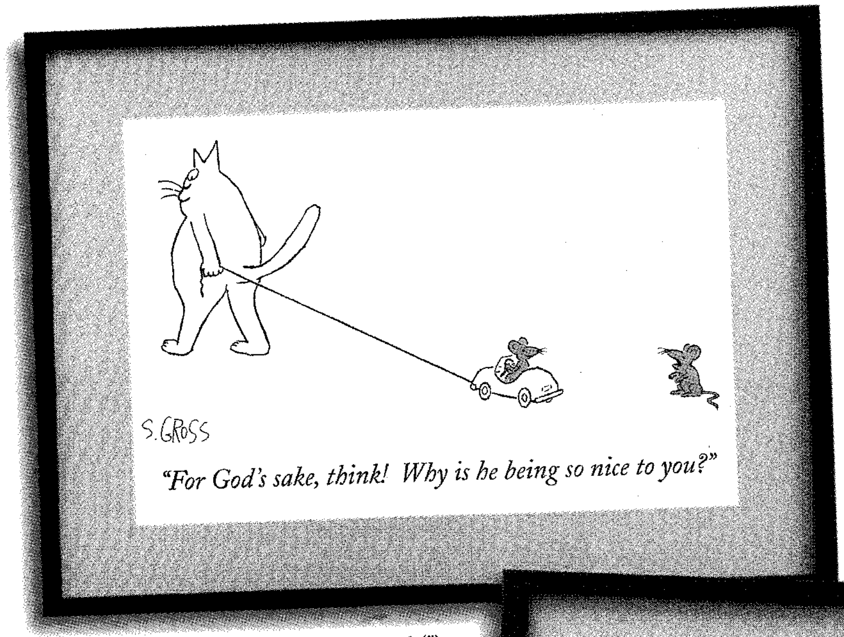

"For God's sake, think! Why is he being so nice to you?"

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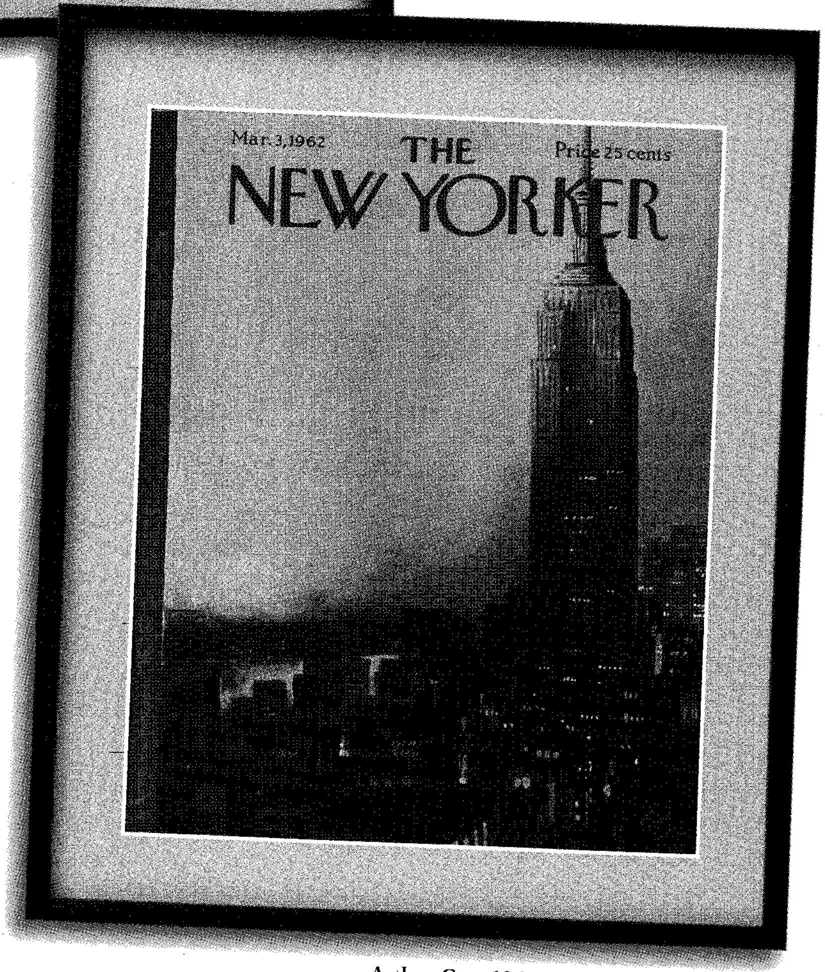

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THE THEATRE

THE LAND OF NOD

When foolery isn't fun.

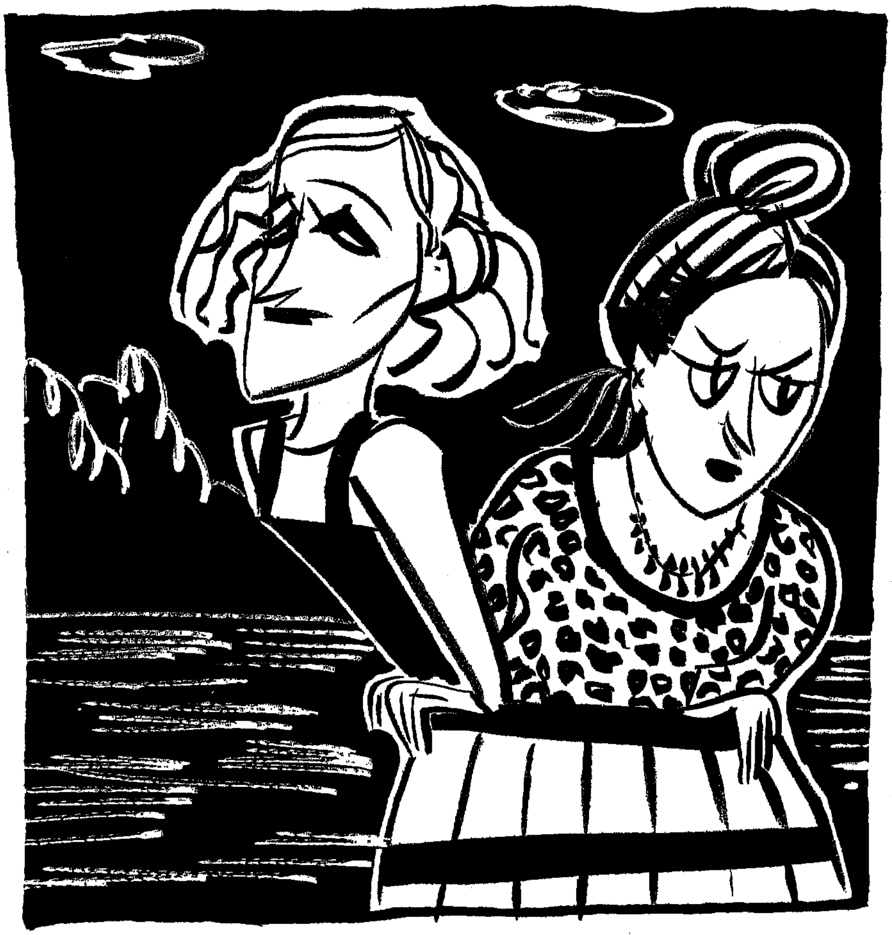
BY JOHN LAHR

All right, class, teacher has had a bad night and is very grumpy, so please pay attention and open your Joe Orton to the following passage:

> In theory there is no subject which could *not* be treated farcically. . . . But in practice farce has become very restricted indeed. . . . My feeling is that the dramatist must have the right to change formal gear at any time. There's supposed to be a healthy shock, for instance, at those moments in "Loot" when an audience suddenly *stops* laughing. So if "Loot" is played as no more than farcical, it won't work.

In order to be good, Orton says, farce must be grounded in the real. Farce is tragedy sped up, where mischief replaces destiny and suffering is shown but not felt. It's this detachment that makes laughter both wonderful and lethal. As Nabokov says, laughter is the best pesticide. But pesticides, unless handled carefully, can do damage. When jokes are good, they illuminate, challenge received opinion, and make unacceptable ideas irresistible. (Here's one from Orton: "All classes are criminal today. We live in an age of equality.") In other words, good jokes make meaning; bad ones merely add to the emptiness of daily life.

Now, boys and girls, to the problem at hand and the reason for my migraine: David Lindsay-Abaire's "Wonder of the World" (at the Manhattan Theatre Club), a mess that in another generation would have been fondly called "screwball comedy." This is the saga of a manic faux-naïve chatterbox, Cass (the fetching and excellent Sarah Jessica Parker), who goes in search of a new life after leaving her husband of seven years, Kip (Alan Tudyk). As Cass exits her marriage with a list of the two hundred and sixty-seven things she wants to do, Kip hands her a platter of trout in aspic. "You better take this for the trip," he says. "You might get hungry." The witless line sets the tone of Lindsay-Abaire's soi-disant wacky humor, in which there are no revelations, no admissions, no questions, only startling juxtapositions. "Nothing you say is registering! *Nothing!*" Kip remarks at one point, inadvertently indicting the whole sorry proceedings.



Sarah Jessica Parker and Kristine Nielsen collude in "Wonder of the World."

TOM BACHTELL

This retrograde stuff is easy to do; it's a trick of the pen. Lindsay-Abaire, who has spent too many nights under his blankets reading Durang and Guare, sets up a comic equation that he resolutely refuses to factor out. He paints his characters into fantastical narrative corners, then extricates them via some implausibility that shocks the audience without enlightening it. Implausibility is piled on top of implausibility until it builds a tower of guff. The mysterious deal-breaker to Cass's marriage, for instance, turns out to be Kip's kinky habit of ingesting severed Barbie-doll heads and shitting them out. (Cass actually brandishes one such doll's head—"Vivian"—under the nose of her distraught husband.) Cass encounters her sidekick-to-be, the suicidal alcoholic Lois (Kristine Nielsen), on a bus to Niagara Falls, where she plans to throw herself over the edge in a barrel that—natch—she carries with her. And, when the play's distressed souls are all brought together in the last act for a group-therapy session, which is conducted as a quiz show by a psychotherapist, who is also a part-time clown, in an orange fright wig, baggy plaid trousers, and red-and-yellow slap shoes, the evening reaches its zenith of fatuity. There are lines in this play that one cannot believe a writer or a director would allow before an audience. In one scene, set in the Native American section of a multi-theme restaurant, Amy Sedaris—who tries and fails to raise a smile with her mugging, in a variety of cameos—appears as a waitress in headdress to explain why the food is late in arriving. "Me take-um smoke break," she says.

As the play's title implies, Lindsay-

Abaire wants to disabuse us of our despair and wake us up to the miracle of existence. Onstage, this epiphany comes to Cass and Lois in the last scene, as, stuck in the barrel, they teeter on a rock, about to hurtle to a watery death. Like Vladimir and Estragon in drag, the ladies wax philosophical:

> CASS: When does the clarity come?
> LOIS: Do you see that?
> CASS: The sun?
> LOIS: Yes. It came up. And you're breathing. What else do you want?
> CASS: Some breakfast would be nice.

This dialogue is at once the play's big thought and its big lie—the theatrical equivalent of pissing on the spectators' shoes and telling them it's raining.

The show's one incidental delight is the touching Kevin Chamberlin, who, as Captain Mike, the Niagara tour-boat guide who falls for Cass, brings a palpable sweetness and a welcome complexity to the otherwise aimless comic playing. The Manhattan Theatre Club has spent a lot of money making this sow's ear look like a silk purse, and David Gallo's witty sets are well utilized by the director, Christopher Ashley. But on the night I saw the play, when, in the middle of the group-therapy scene, Kip was heard to say, "This is everything I don't like," somebody in the audience applauded. Thank you, Jesus.

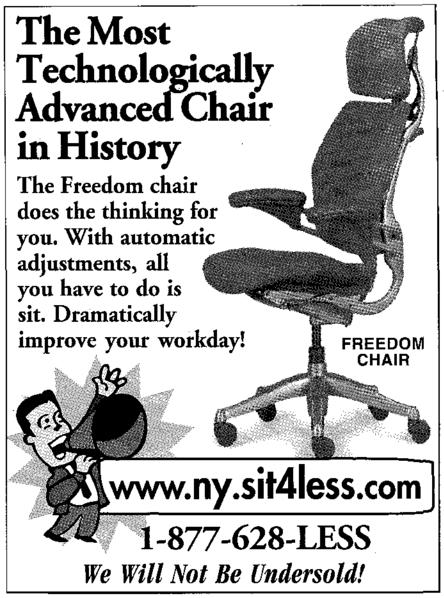
Five minutes into "By Jeeves" (at the Helen Hayes), a failed 1974 musical, with book and lyrics by Alan Ayckbourn and music by Andrew Lloyd Webber, which was restaged in 1996, I began to fantasize about lines that, if uttered, would bring a show to a screeching halt. ("Hello, Mr. Godot" was the best I could do.) But there was no stopping the unrelenting bonhomie of this lame amusement.

Here, in the drab mahogany browns of a British church hall, P. G. Wodehouse's shambolic Bertie Wooster (John Scherer) is preparing to give a concert—to raise money for repairs on the church steeple—when his banjo is stolen. A car is dispatched in search of a substitute, and Wooster, with the help of his ingenious, haughty factotum, Jeeves (well played by Martin Jarvis), improvises a story to keep us entertained while we wait. In the end, the banjo shows up, but it has no strings and produces no sound. Nonetheless, with the cast romping around in makeshift "Wizard of Oz" gear, Wooster strums his shallow heart out. This, it seems to me, is an eloquent metaphor for the occasion: nothing calling attention to itself.

Wodehouse's comic world is peopled by the stick figures of privilege—chinless wonders, blowhard judges, daft flappers, philistines who go by such nicknames as Bingo, Stinker, and Stiffy (if only). Here, his artificial merry-go-round is topped by a theatrical artificiality whose sight gags—pantomime cows, dancing trees, collapsing chairs, a cardboard car, a yellow ball for a moon—huff and puff in an attempt to stir some ripples of surprise on the still water of the story. At one point—the show's only moment of truth—Jeeves announces, "We appear to have run out of narrative."

True to form, Andrew Lloyd Webber's melodies are generic, and are reprised ad nauseam at the finale. Alan Ayckbourn, who, as the director, works manfully to whip a little fun into this listless tale, is less persuasive as a lyricist. Together, they make the unexceptional sound—well, unexceptional. The most entertaining sung moment is actually spoken—when Jeeves launches into a sort of Gilbert and Sullivan riff in "What Have You Got to Say, Jeeves?" Otherwise, the simpering love songs have no purchase on the heart, because no character has a remote purchase on reality. In a show that contains not one authentic feeling or discernible idea and caters, as far as I can make out, to the brain-dead, the title song—really a list of easy rhymes—sung by a trio of Wodehousean nincompoops, does contain one droll couplet: "Our collective I.Q. / Of around 42."

Now, class, the bell is about to ring. Our time is almost up. But, inspired by "Jeeves" 's American bounder and boor Cyrus Budge III, Jr., I've got fifty dollars for anyone who can provide me with a single positive portrait of an American written by a major British playwright, including Mr. Ayckbourn, since 1960. I plan to win this bet, which will be the only thing of value to be got from this week's theatregoing. Meanwhile, we have learned a lot. In the past, you'll remember, there was the theatre of cruelty, the theatre of protest, and the theatre of the absurd. The plays under discussion represent a new genre for our winded times: the theatre of folderol. I say the hell with it. ♦



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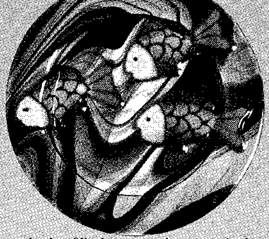

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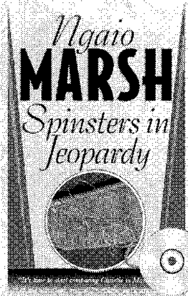

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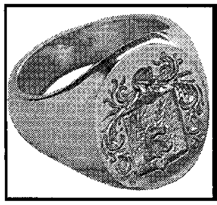

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MUSICAL EVENTS

MADAME X

Dinner with the dark lady of the piano.

BY ALEX ROSS

"I was terrible," Martha Argerich said, after drawing hysterical applause with a recent pair of performances at Carnegie Hall. "I was in a strange state. My mind was on other things." Argerich was sitting in a midtown hotel restaurant, amid a motley, lively group of friends. She had just played Beethoven's First Piano Concerto with the Montreal Symphony. The friends, speaking in various accents of Argentina, France, Hungary, and California, protested that she had in fact been stupendous, colossal, magical. The conductor Charles Dutoit, who is nearly as famous for being one of Argerich's former husbands as for leading the Montreal, joined in the campaign of reassurance as he hastened to catch a plane to Paris. "You were not terrible at all, *pas du tout*," he told her. But Argerich had made up her mind. "I played better in April," she said. She waved the praise away as if it were a silly dessert.

Argerich, a sixty-year-old native of Argentina, reigns supreme over the feudalistic world of virtuoso pianists. Rivals become mere fans around her, lingering at the door of her dressing room and then skulking away. Her concerts conjure up scenes from another place and time: grown men running down the aisles clutching bouquets, world-renowned musicians pummelling the railings of the upper boxes, jaded critics breaking into foolish smiles. Argerich brings to bear qualities that are seldom contained in one person: she is a pianist of brain-teasing technical agility; she is a charismatic woman with an enigmatic reputation; she is an unaffected interpreter whose native language is music. This last may be the quality that sets her apart. A lot of pianists play huge double octaves; a lot of pianists photograph well. But few have the unerring naturalness of phrasing that allows them to embody the music rather than interpret it.

Sensing that my well of superlatives was running dry, I gave up critical objectivity and accepted an invitation to meet the woman in person. With the help of Argerich's daughter, Annie Dutoit, whom the pianist visits when she is in New York, I broke through a crowd of autograph seekers to the inner sanctum of her dressing room. In some cases, the dressing rooms of musical celebrities are places of suffocating sycophancy, but Argerich's had a kind of nervous camaraderie. The usual glad-handers were absent. Argerich was sitting on a couch, her eyes flitting alertly around the room. Her first question was whether anyone had matches. After undergoing treatment for melanoma, which had spread to her lungs, she stopped smoking, but she is delighted when people smoke in her presence.

She is a compact woman, with surprisingly small hands and an enormous mane of long black hair. Her beauty dwells in her large eyes, which are at once sad and sly, and in her smile, which has been compared more than once to the Mona Lisa's. Musicians have a history of falling in love with her and coming away crushed by the force of her personality. It is said that one of her amours would labor for hours over a difficult score, only to watch Argerich, a person of nocturnal habits, slouch downstairs in the middle of the afternoon, rub her eyes, and sight-read the music effortlessly.

Argerich made her début at the age of eight, in Buenos Aires, and she was winning European competitions by the age of sixteen. At first, she pursued the usual international career, but as she matured she became a law unto herself, defying such would-be Svengalis as Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli. Even in the few hours I was with her, I caught a glimpse of her child-like temper; it flared when she felt herself being pushed prematurely toward a decision for which she was not prepared. "I knew this was going to happen," she said, her husky voice rising in volume and descending in pitch. "It is becoming *confusing* now, it is becoming a *big mess*." Solutions were proposed; Argerich selected one; the calm of conversation resumed.

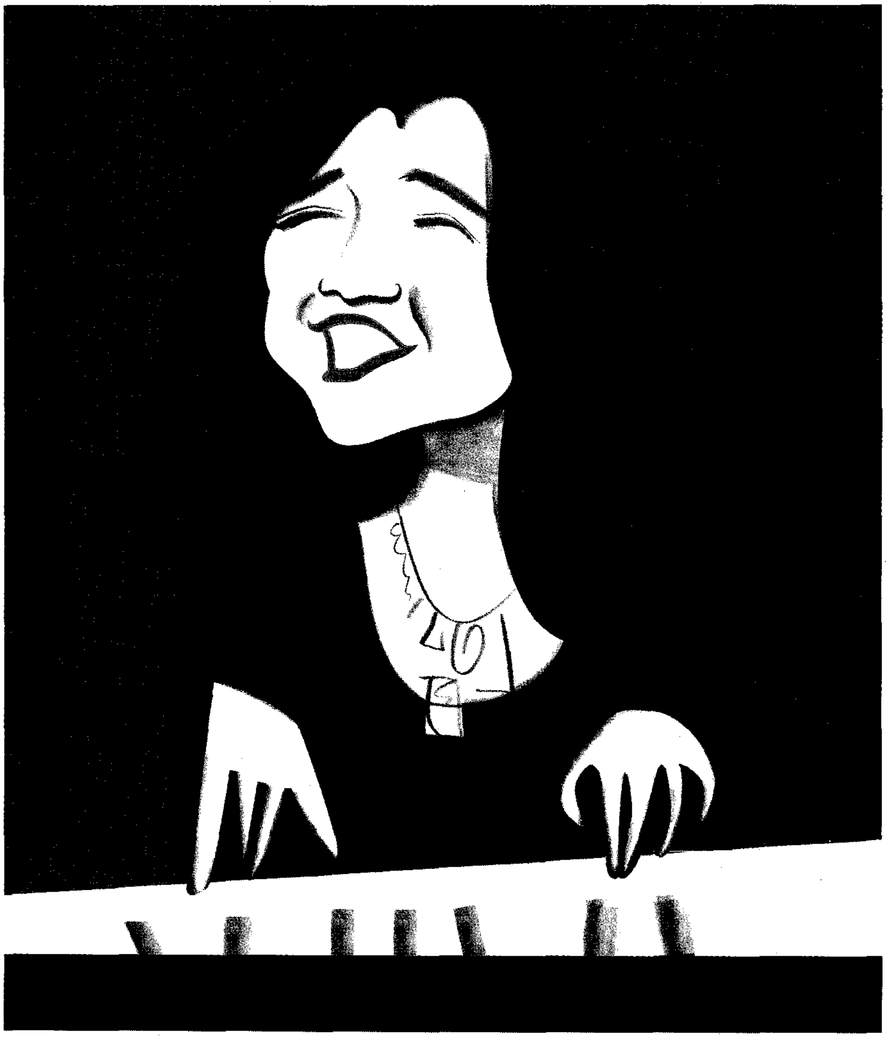
Argerich is notoriously difficult to pin down. She cancels concerts, even entire tours, at the last minute, changes programs at will, and generally drives the programming people crazy. She has become a substantial presence in New York in recent years, but only because her stardom has given her unprecedented latitude to schedule events on short notice. This season, she is alleged to be presenting a "Perspectives" series at Carnegie Hall, with programs planned for January, April, and May, although no one is going to guarantee anything until she is actually seen sitting down at the keyboard. Administrators attribute her antics to self-indulgent eccentricity, but it might be asked whether Argerich's day-at-a-time approach makes any less sense than the five-year-plan mentality that prevails in the executive suites. These days, performers are asked to be brilliant onstage and dronelike in transit; they are expected to commit to 11 A.M. rehearsals in the year 2006. The result is a lockstep concert world in which New York débuts feel like the ratification of deals made years ago and celebrity initiatives have the momentum of continental drift. Argerich is driving a wedge into the system, as Sviatoslav Richter did before her, with his spur-of-the-moment piano happenings in towns scattered between the South of France and Siberia.

In the restaurant, hours pass and night falls. I feel that I should go, but it is strangely difficult to leave. The cosmopolitan chatter goes on at a dotty pace, as if we had all been thrown together at some turn-of-the-century spa. Argerich is asked why she did not play the concerto by Alberto Ginastera that had been announced for the Carnegie series. "I did not learn it," she replies. The conductor Christoph Eschenbach drops by. He has just conducted Samuel Barber's "Adagio for Strings" amid the ruins of the World Trade Center. Argerich trembles as he describes the scene, and touches his arm when he mentions the smoke and the smell. The friends remain at the table, and the dinner menus reappear. Eschenbach notes that from where he is staying, opposite Juilliard, he can see students slaving away at pianos until midnight. He mimes an intense young person practicing. "That is what I should be doing!" Argerich exclaims. Everyone laughs.

In the event, Argerich's withering self-critique was not completely at odds with reality. In the first movement of the Tchaikovsky First Concerto, she seemed ill at ease, with the huge marble chords of the introduction sounding a little rushed and jumpy. But the sense of effort—rare to the point of extinction in Argerich's playing—disappeared when she reached the oasis of the slow movement. It was as if she had given up on the idea of a great performance and begun playing only for herself. In the process, a great performance emerged. She rescued Tchaikovsky's warhorse from the usual virtuoso bludgeoning and restored its sense of aristocratic play. It came out sounding like new music, contemporary music, radical tonality.

In the Beethoven First Concerto the next afternoon, Argerich performed a similar feat of transfiguration. Again, it was playing of dazzling lightness, almost jazzy in tone. The glistening runs were marked with tiny jabs of emphasis, about one in a bar, so that they seemed to dance above the ensemble. Then, just as the music was ready to float away to some Ravelian heaven, demonic runs rose up from the bass. The way the piano suddenly thunders under the pressure of Argerich's small frame is a physical fact that resists explanation. It can only be described as a possession, a visitation, such as seems to happen when great singers take the stage.

Argerich's performances reminded me, in an oblique way, of Waltraud Meier's singing of the role of Isolde, which had astounded a Carnegie Hall audience the previous week. The soprano had appeared in a concert performance of "Tristan" with the Chicago Symphony, under Daniel Barenboim. Meier's Isolde, blind with rage at the beginning, became uncannily serene at the end, lost in a world of her own making. On a more intimate scale, in the slow movement of the Beethoven, Argerich offered a similar epiphany—a sense of spacious, encompassing solitude. "Do I alone hear this melody?" Isolde sings. Not anymore. ♦



ROBERT RISKO

Martha Argerich is a force of nature who transforms whatever she plays.

THE CURRENT CINEMA

ILLUSIONS

New twists from Richard Linklater and David Mamet.

BY DAVID DENBY

If you feel like taking a snooze during Richard Linklater's "Waking Life," go right ahead. There's lots more of the movie to come, and a short, vision-filled rest is perfectly in keeping with a film whose hero—an unformed young man—is caught in a dream from which he cannot awaken, a dream whose events may contain the entire meaning of his life and the meaning of cinema, too. "Waking Life" is an informal but stirring metaphysical art show, composed in equal parts of profundity and fervent nonsense. Linklater shot the material on video as a live-action feature and turned it over to a team of animation artists headed by Bob Sabiston. The artists then "painted" each sequence, using software developed by Sabiston. Their work shows individual flair, though they all stayed within certain stylistic conventions—largely solid colors (in the manner of a graphic novel) and mostly autumnal tones (lots of brown, ochre, maroon). What we see is a young man (Wiley Wiggins) walking around Austin (and, briefly, San Antonio and New York), where he encounters the same kinds of people featured a decade ago in Linklater's initial triumph, "Slacker"—the coffeehouse Kierkegaards, the visionaries, the theoretical scientists, the ecstatic bums who are mad to talk. As in "Slacker," the speakers are not actors (with a few exceptions, including Ethan Hawke and Julie Delpy) but local characters and celebrities. As each person launches into speech (Wiggins mainly listens), the world around him—the fallen leaves, the houses, the interiors of rooms—gently wiggles. It is a view of matter compatible with the notion expressed by a scientist in the movie that the molecules of the universe, though part of a machine, may also engage in some loosey-goosey random behavior. There's no waste motion in this film: anything that moves has some thematic significance. As the people speak, extensions of their thoughts jump out of their faces and hands—little twittering creatures, bolts of lightning. The hair of a witchy young woman turns into snakes. The body language is electric.

The young man thinks he's awake, then realizes he's dreaming; he finally wakes up in bed, only to realize that the act of waking is itself part of his unending dream. Is he trapped forever? Are we, in fact, watching the brief period of consciousness that we're told (in the movie) lingers after physical death? Linklater came up with the screenplay by giving some formal shape to his characters' manias. Almost everything we hear is directed toward the themes of reverie, apprehension, and death. A film director, explaining the ideas of the French critic André Bazin, says that film captures "the moment"—that is, a single instant of reality, with all its details blessed by God. But then Linklater himself shows up (playing pinball) and says that a single moment may contain all of eternity. The talk oscillates between the notions of extreme concentration and infinite inclusiveness. Some of the language is sludgy and jargonish, and Linklater has better taste in male than female speakers—the women come off as New Agey and hypersensitive. But there are plenty of jokes, and a gleeful appreciation of the nut-ball wit of outrageous cranks. In all, "Waking Life" is a revolutionary and beautiful movie—a fresh film experience put together with

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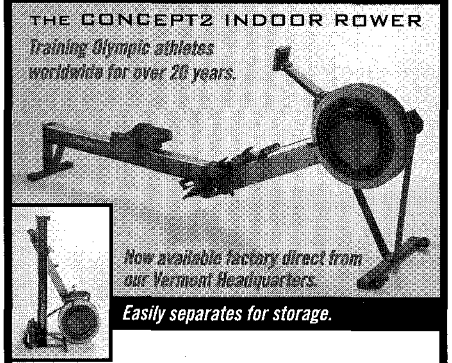

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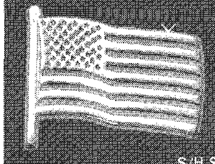

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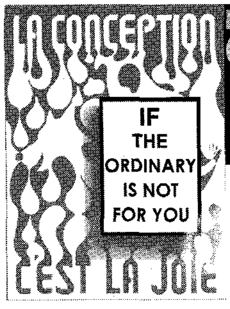

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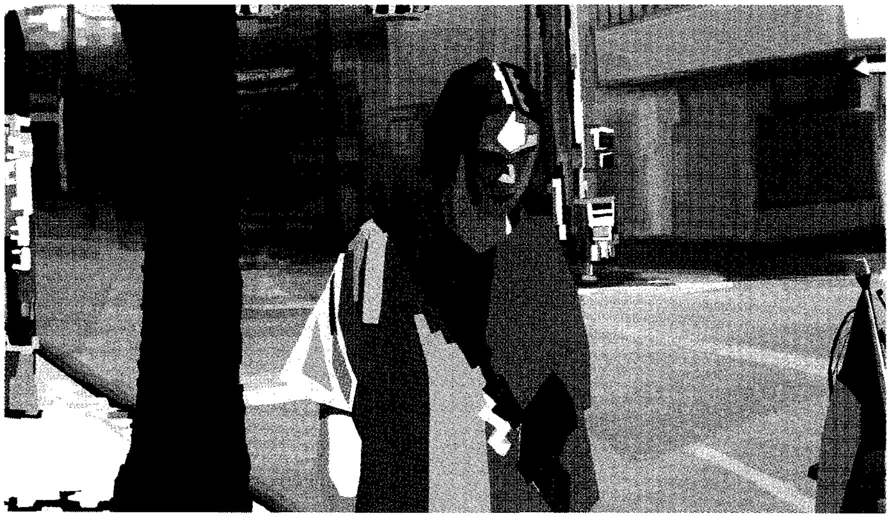
passionate craft and a sneaky, offhand craving for the sublime. When Linklater, in character, tells Wiley Wiggins to wake up, he floats into the sky and becomes a tiny speck. He may, for all we know, be drifting into death, but, for the battered American independent cinema, Linklater's movie is the highest form of life seen in the last couple of years.



Wiley Wiggins in Linklater's animated live-action movie, "Waking Life."

RANDY COLE/FOX SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES

Scenes that seem to take place deep inside an airless crypt; dialogue that tattoos the walls with sinister repetitions; performances so tightly wound that the actors might be speaking with a shiv held between their ribs—the elements of David Mamet's style, in the previous seven films he has directed, have been cold, hollowly precise, and unresonant. But Mamet's new movie, "Heist," is fully alive—so alive, in fact, that it's high-grade fun from beginning to end. Mamet plays his usual games—the characters are always turning the tables on one another—but he is working for the first time with a great spontaneous actor, Gene Hackman, and Hackman dispels the Mamet chill, the portentous and equivocal atmosphere of such films as "House of Games" and "The Spanish Prisoner." As Joe Moore, the head of a small but formidable gang of thieves working out of Boston, Hackman, who is seventy-one years old, sends waves of energy through the production. He looks terrific: his eyes sparkle, his body is supple—it's one of the most dynamic performances of his thirty-five-year career. In the past, when a mannered (though entertaining) actor like Joe Mantegna spoke in Mametese, he seemed an almost spooky extension of Mamet himself, a superb mannequin who dripped menace. But Hackman works with a joyous authority that seems to come out of the experience of the character he's playing. He liberates David Mamet from David Mamet.

Joe Moore creates a fraternal air around him, but he's a steely and determined man, firmly in control of a crew that includes his young wife, Fran (Rebecca Pidgeon), a hipster moll with attitude; his old friend Bobby (Delroy Lindo), who has violent skills; and a witty utility man, Pinky (Ricky Jay), who is so versatile that he can, without a second's preparation, throw himself in front of a moving car in order to divert the police. At the beginning of the movie, Joe wants to retire with his wife on an elegant boat that he has built for himself. His gang knocks over a jewelry store, but when the men go to collect their money from their longtime fence, Bergman (Danny DeVito), he demands one last job before paying them off. Bergman, who runs some sort of schmatte business as a front, has a need to betray people, which he loves to expound on; at some level, he expects crime to make sense. He bankrolls Joe's operation, and in order to protect his investment he imposes his nephew Jimmy Silk (Sam Rockwell) onto the gang—cocky and trigger-happy Jimmy, who thinks he's a great criminal and a great lover and whom everyone in Joe's gang calls "lame" (as in "I don't want to work with lame"). They're stuck with this useless peacock, who goes after Fran. But they play tricks on him, convincing him that he's part of something big even as they're forcing him to the sidelines. For long stretches, we're in Jimmy's position, never sure whether we're watching a heist or a scam.

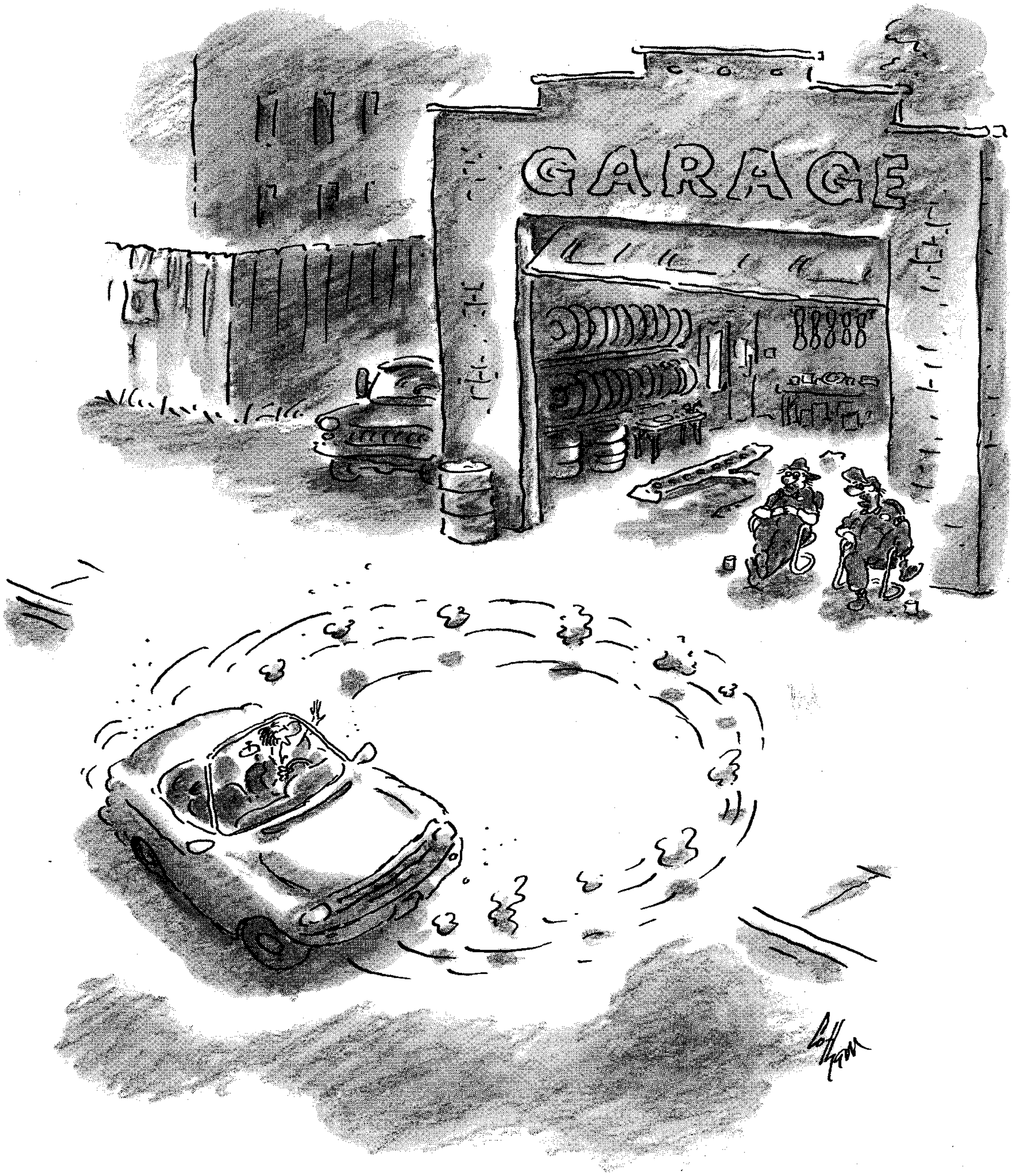
The robberies are very intricate, and when bullets are fired people fall over and bleed. Still, I never for a moment thought of this picture as a genuine heist movie, like "The Asphalt Jungle" or "Rififi." I thought of it as Mamet indulging his obsession while doing the hard work of truly entertaining an audience. His obsession, of course (in both plays and movies), is flimflam and con artistry, the maliciously crafted illusion that surrounds, conquers, and destroys. Joe Moore's gang steals jewelry and then a great deal of gold, but spends less time pursuing valuables than putting on the detestable Jimmy. The gang is like a tiny club of ace actors (Jimmy is a bad actor). My guess is that a con man's tricks function for Mamet as the distilled essence of movies and theatre—dramatic forms designed to convince people that the illusion that holds them is the truth. For Mamet, the audience's desire to believe is a kind of loamy field waiting to be plowed and seeded. But he's a hostile dramatist. His obsessiveness suggests that he requires us to be taken in but also despises us for being such suckers.

At least in "Heist" he's loosening up a bit. One of the pleasures of the movie is that the members of the gang possess some affection for one another; they like to chat and carry on, taunting each other in Mamet's peculiar shorthand idiom, leavened with such outbreaks of tough-guy baroque as "I don't want you as quiet as an ant pissing on cotton. I want you as quiet as an ant not even thinking about pissing on cotton." And for the first time Mamet is thoroughly involved in the physical life of what he's showing us—the winches and pulleys and money bags and the rest of the paraphernalia of thievery. Robert Elswit's very active cinematography is shaded blue-gray and silver, the colors of a safe. "Heist" is a handsome and playful movie, with some stunningly nasty passages. Near the end, Danny DeVito's Bergman, who's been shot but still hopes for sense, asks, "Don't you want to hear my last words?" "I just did," Hackman says, plugging him. ♦

THE BACK PAGE

CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

This marks the third consecutive year that *The New Yorker* has run its Cartoon Caption Contest. Here's how it works: We (the editors of the magazine) furnish a cartoon, or, rather, the illustrative portion of a cartoon, and you (the readers of the magazine) try to write a caption that completes the cartoon. We pick the best one; the winner receives the framed original, with the winning caption. This year's drawing, by Frank Cotham, asks the age-old question "Why would a man drive a car in circles in front of a garage?" Submit your caption at http://www.cartoonbank.com/caption.asp.



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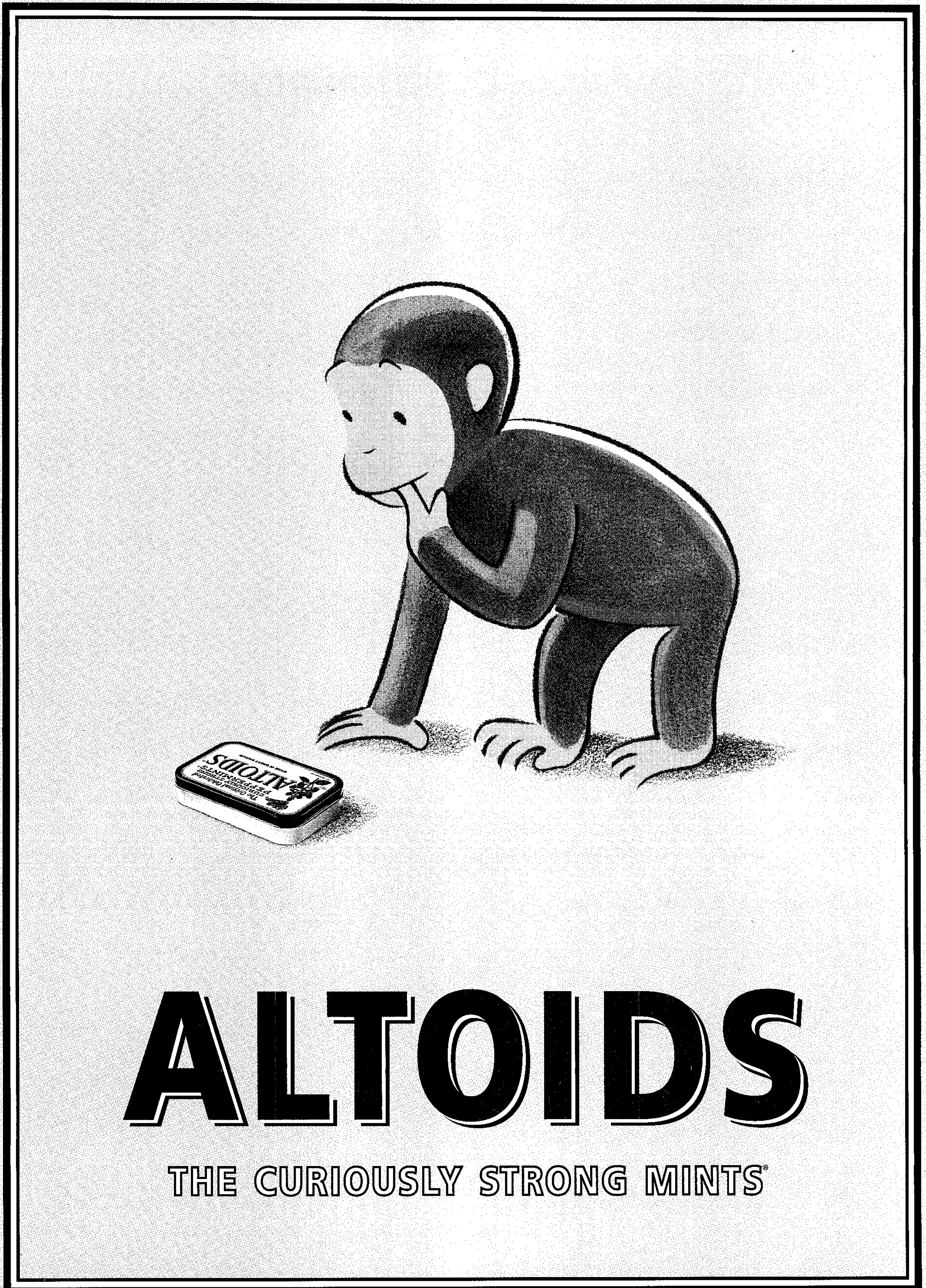

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